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24

Robert Antoine, S.J.	The Technique of Oral Composition in the <i>Rāmāyaṇa</i>	1
Rien T. Segers	The Missing Element in Contemporary Reader-Response Criticism	37
R.K. Kaul	Pascal and the Science of Man	47
Rusie Tharu	Reading against the Imperial Grain : Intertextuality, Narrative Structure and Liberal Humanism in Mulk Raj Anand's <i>Untouchable</i>	60
Subin Dasgupta	Popular and Authentic Fiction : Towards a Differentiating Process	72
Hugeno A. van Erven	Political Theatre and the Inadequacy of Textual Criticism	85
Nalir Kumar Das	Medieval Indian Theatre : A Study in Terminology	94
Mohamed Elias	Aubrey Menen and Kamala Das : Anglo-Dravidian Revolt against Aryan Myths	124
Arundhati Bandyopadhyay	Creatures of an Outrageous Reality : A Study of the Narrative Styles of Two Third World Writers	134
Mohit K. Ray	Use of Source Material for the Development of the Theme of Martyrdom : Eliot and Tagore – A Comparative Study	146
C. Subba Rao	Poetic Identity and the Crisis of Vocation	158
K.N. Ramamurti	Research Note	162
Honey Kumar Sarkar	Reprint : The Man of Letters	164
J.C.L. Nolas		175

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Except for Chapter 3 which dealt with the verbal forms connected with the introduction or conclusion of speeches, all the other chapters, so far, have dealt with nominal, adjectival or adverbial expressions. In the following chapters traditional formulae will be analyzed which consist of verbal expressions. The following order will be followed :

- a. Past passive participles
- b. The future
- c. The perfect
- d. The infinitive in *-tum* (*tumun*) followed by a finite verb of three syllables

Past passive participles are profusely used in the epic in the three genders. At the end of a or c and of b or d, they present the suitable metrical pattern and appear in those cases which have the same number of syllables as the nom. sing. A choice has been made of the most important participles : it will suffice as an illustration of the technique governing their use.

end of a and c

*kruddha*

*santapta*

*prāpta*

*sampanna*

*prīta*

end of b and d

*karṣita*

*āgata*

*anvita*

*rata*

*duḥkhita*

*pālita*

*bhūṣita*

*śobhita*

*samāhita*

*sivita*

*kruddha* at the end of a and c appears 222 times, chiefly in battle scenes. With the use of *upasargas* it can serve in different structures :

— structure 6+2 : x x x x v — *kruddha* (103)

— structure 5+3 : x x x x v *saṃkruddha* (60)

\* These are the last completed chapters of the late Father Robert Antoine's unfinished book we have been serializing.

- structure 4+4 : x x x x *susamkruddha* (29)
- structure 3-| 5 : x x̣ x *paramakruddha* (24)
- bhṛśasamkruddha* (5)
- structure 2+| 6 : x x *paramasamkruddha* (1)

We shall quote here those *ślokas* where the verb *abhi-dhāv* (to attack) is used either in the active or in the middle voice in connection with *-kruddha* :

- te taṃ yajñahanam jñātvā *krodhaparyākulekṣaṇāḥ* |  
*abhyadhāvanta samkruddhās* tiṣṭha tiṣṭheti cābruvan || 1.39.25
- *abhyadhāvat susamkruddhaṃ* Vasiṣṭhaṃ japatāṃ varam |  
 huṃkāreṇaiva tān sarvān nirdadāha mahāmuniḥ || 1.54.6
- *abhyadhāvat susamkruddhaḥ* prajāḥ kāla ivāntakaḥ |  
 sa kṛtvā bhairavaṃ nādaṃ cālayanniva medinīm || 3.2.9
- ityuktva *mṛgaśāvākṣīm alātasadrśekṣaṇā* |  
*abhyadhāvat susamkruddhā* maholkā rohiṇīm iva || 3.17.17
- *abhyadhāvaṃ susamkruddhas* tīkṣṇaśṛṅgo mṛgākṛtiḥ |  
 jighāmsur akṛtaprajñas taṃ prahāram anusmaran || 3.37.10
- so'pi tān vānarān sarvān naṣṭāḥ sthetyabravīd balī |  
*abhyadhāvata samkruddho* muṣṭim udyamya saṃhitam || 4.47.17
- iti bruvāṇo Hanumān sāyudhair haribhir vṛtaḥ |  
*abhyadhāvata samkruddho* rākṣasendrasutaṃ prati || 6.68.22
- vāryamāṇaḥ *susamkruddhaḥ* suhṛdbhir hitabuddhibhiḥ |  
*abhyadhāvata samkruddhaḥ* khe graho rohiṇīm iva || 6.80.38
- Dhūmrākṣaṃ tāḍitam dr̥ṣṭvā patitaṃ śonitokṣitam |  
*abhyadhāvat susamkruddho* Māṇibhadraṃ Daśānanaḥ || 7.15.8

*-santapta* ( – – – ) and *karśita* ( – v – ) are equivalent alternatives, *santapta* at the end of a and c, *karśita* at the end of b and d ; *santapta* occurs 59 times but is not found in *Bāla-kāṇḍa* while *karśita* occurs 42 times and is not found in *Uttara-kāṇḍa*. The main instances are :

end of a and c			end of b and d		
śoka-santapta		(24)	śoka-karśita		(23)
duḥkha-	„	(6)	duḥkha-	„	(1)
Sītāharaṇa-	„	(2)	Sītāharaṇa-	„	(3)
duḥkhābhi-	„	(2)	bhāryāharaṇa-	„	(1)
śokābhi-	„	(5)			
kāmābhi-	„	(1)			
snebābhi-	„	(1)			

A few examples :

- nīyamānā tu śabalā Rāma rājñā *mahātmanā* /  
duḥkhitā cintayāmāsa rudantī *śokakarśitā* // 1.53.2
- *evam uktvā* sa Bharataṃ bhāryām abhyetya *Rāghavaḥ* /  
*uvāca śokasantaptaḥ pūrṇacandranibhānanām* // 2.95.18
- sā tathoktā tu *vaidehī* nirbhayā *śokakarśitā* /  
tṛṇam antarataḥ kṛtvā Rāvaṇaṃ *pratyabhāṣata* // 3.54.1
- kruddhaṃ niḥśvasamānaṃ taṃ pradīptaṃ iva *tejasā* /  
bhrātur *vyasanasantaptaḥ* dṛṣṭvā *Daśarathātmajam* // 4.33.2
- taṃ tu dṛṣṭvā *maṇiśreṣṭham* Rāghavaḥ *śokakarśitaḥ* /  
netrābhyām aśrupūrṇābhyām *Sugrivaṃ idam abravīt* // 5.64.2
- śrutvā vinihataṃ saṃkhye Kumbhakarṇaṃ *mahābalam* /  
Rāvaṇaḥ *śokasantapto* mumoha ca papāta ca // 6.56.2
- duḥkhena ca *susantaptaḥ* smṛtvā tad *ghoradarśanam* /  
avāṇmukho dīnāmanā vyāhartuṃ na śaśāka ha // 7.95.17

– *prāpta* (– –) at the end of a and c and *āgata* (– v –) at the end of b and d often carry the same meaning (“having arrived or reached”) and their position in the *śloka* is clear. *prāpta* occurs 157 times at the end of a and c, and *āgata* 186 times at the end of b and d.

end of a and c		end of b and d
	structure 6+2	
x x x x v – <i>prāpta</i>	(85)	
	structure 5+3	
x x x x v sam <i>prāpta</i>	(30)	x x x x v <i>āgata</i> (111)
	structure 4+4	
x x x x anup <i>prāpta</i>	(26)	x x x x sam <i>āgata</i> (30)
		up <i>āgata</i> (38)
	structure 3+5	
x x x samanup <i>prāpta</i>	(11)	x x x samup <i>āgata</i> (7)
anusam <i>prāpta</i>	(3)	
abhisam <i>prāpta</i>	(2)	

A few examples :

- Sumatis tu *mahātejā* Viśvāmitram *upāgatam* /  
śrutvā *naravaraśreṣṭhaḥ* pratyudgaman *mahāyaśāḥ* // 1.46.20

- *svayamvare kila prāptā tvam aṇena yaśasvinā /*  
*Rāghaveṇeti me Sīte kathā śrutim upāgatā // 2.110.23*  
 — *evam uktvā tu kākutstham Virādhah śarapīḍitah /*  
*babhūva svargasamprāpto nyastadeho mahābalaḥ // 3.3.25*

— *sampanna* (— — —) occurs 112 times at the end of a and c, while (*sam*)-*anvita* (v — v —) occurs 111 times at the end of b and d. Here are a few of the most frequent instances :

end of a and c			end of b and d		
bala-sampanna	(7)		bala-samanvita	(11)	
rūpa-	„	(9)	rūpa-	„	(3)
guṇa-	„	(5)	duḥkha-	„	(4)
vīrya-	„	(7)	krodha-	„	(4)
sattva-	„	(11)	prīti-	„	(2)
rūpayauvana-	„	(3)	kautūhala-	„	(5)
śubhalakṣaṇa-	„	(1)	tapobala-	„	(5)
sarvalakṣaṇa-	„	(1)	duḥkhaśoka-	„	(4)
sarvagūṇa-	„	(2)	sarvagūṇānvita	(6)	

A few examples :

- *tāḥ sarvagūṇasampannā rūpayauvanasamnyutāḥ /*  
*dṛṣṭvā sarvātmako vāyur idaṁ vacanam abravīt // 1.31.13*  
 — *suprītas tena vākyena Lakṣmaṇasya mahādyutiḥ /*  
*vimṛśan rocayāmāsa deśam sarvagūṇānvitam // 3.14.8*  
 — *īdṛśā buddhisampannā jītakrodhā jītendriyāḥ*  
*draṣṭavyā vānarendreṇa diṣṭyā darśanam āgatāḥ // 4.4.18*  
 — *tāvubhau vegasampannau raṇakarmaviśāradau /*  
*sarvabhūtanamanogrāhi cakratur yuddham uttamam // 5.46.30*  
 — *tayos tad vacanam śrutvā kautūhalasamanvitam /*  
*katha; āmāsa Kākutsthas tasya rājño yathāgatam // 7.79.4*

— *prīta* (— —) is found 70 times at the end of a and c :

- structure 6+2 : x x x x v — *prīta* (28)  
 — structure 5+3 : x x x x v *suprīta* (8)  
 — structure 3+5 : x x x *paramaprīta* (33)  
 — structure 2+6 : x x *paramasamprīta* (1)

A few examples are given to illustrate the formula *paramaprīta*.

- *sa caturbbhir mahābhāgaiḥ putrair Daśarathaḥ priyaiḥ /*  
*babhūva paramaprīto devair iva pitāmahaḥ // 1.17.20*
- *ityevam uktvā sa munis tam ādāya nṛpātmajam /*  
*jagāma paramaprīto Viśvāmitraḥ svam āśramam // 3.36.9*
- *tasya tad vacanam śrutvā Lakṣmaṇasya subhāṣitam /*  
*Sūgrīvaḥ paramaprīto vākyam etad uvāca ha // 4.37.4*
- *tacchrutvā paramaprīto Rāmo dharmabhṛtām varaḥ /*  
*Vibhīṣaṇam uvācedaṁ vākyajñō vākyakovidam // 6.99.35*

Six more past passive participles chosen among many others will now be briefly analyzed. They all belong to the second half of b and d and have the metrical pattern (v)—v—.

— *duḥkhita* is found 60 times at the end of b and d in the following structures :

- structure 5+3 : x x x x v duḥkhita (24)
- structure 4+4 : x x x x suduḥkhita (17)
- structure 3+5 : x x x bhṛsaduḥkhita (16)
- structure 2+6 : x x paramaduḥkhita (3)

— *pālita* occurs 33 times at the end of b and d :

- structure 5+3 : x x x x v pālita (31)
- structure 3+5 : x x x paripālita (2)
- *Kiṣkindhā* is qualified as *Vālipālītā* (4)
- *Laṅkā* is qualified as *Rāvaṇapālītā* (10)

— *bhūṣita* occurs 129 times at the end of b and d :

- structure 5+3 : x x x x v bhūṣita (73)
- structure 4+4 : x x x x vibhūṣita (54)
- structure 2+6 : x x paramabhūṣita (2)

Formulae ending with (v) *bhūṣita* are numerous. A few are listed below :

hema-bhūṣita	(13)
ratna- „	(4)
kāñcana- „	(6)
sarvābharaṇa- „	(10)
divyābharaṇa- „	(7)
varābharaṇa- „	(3)

nānāratna-vibhūṣita	(3)
sarvaratna-	„ (5)
muktāmaṇi-	„ (2)
hema-	„ (4)

– *śobhita* occurs 67 times at the end of b and d :

– structure 5- -3 : x x x x v śobhita	(35)
– structure 3+5 : x x x upaśobhita	(31)
abhiśobhita	(1)

– *samāhita* occurs 91 times at the end of b and d :

– structure 4- -4 : x x x x samāhita	(55)
– structure 3- -5 : x x x susamāhita	(36)

– *sevita* occurs 69 times at the end of b and d :

– structure 5- -3 : x x x x v sevita	(33)
– structure 4- -4 : x x x x niṣevita	(29)
– structure 3- -5 : x x x upasevita	(5)
– structure 2+6 : x x samupasevita	(2)

A few examples :

- devadānavagandharvaiḥ kinnarair upaśobhitam /  
praśāntahariṇākīrṇaṁ dvijasaṅghaniṣevitam ||
- Vasiṣṭhasyāśramapadaṁ brahmalokam ivāparam /  
dadarśa jayatāṁ śreṣṭho Viṣvāmitro mahābalaḥ // 1.50.24, 28
- te gatvā dūram adhvānam gate'rdhadivase tadā /  
Jāhnavīm saritāṁ śreṣṭhāṁ dadṛśur munisevitām || 1.34.6
- candrāṁśuvikacaprakhyāṁ pāṇḍurāṁ ratnabhūṣitam /  
sajjam tiṣṭhati Rāmasya vālavayajanam uttamam || 2.13.8
- evam uktas tu vacanaṁ Rāmo dharmabhṛtāṁ varah /  
bhūyas tāṁ abravīd vākyam mātaram bhṛśaduhkhitām // 2.21.12
- iyam ādityasaṁkāśaiḥ padmaiḥ surabhigandhibhiḥ /  
adūre dṛśyate ramyā padmini padmaśobhitā // 3.14.11
- iti rāmābhyanujñātaḥ Sugrīvo vānararṣabhaḥ /  
praviveśa purīm ramyāṁ Kiṣkindhāṁ Vālipālitām || 4.25.16
- yathā Rāghavanirmuktaḥ śaraḥ śvasanavikramaḥ /  
gacchet tadvad gamiṣyāmi Laṅkāṁ Rāvaṇapālitām // 5.1.36

- nava *nāgasahasrāṇi* yayur āsthāya vānarāḥ /  
mānuṣaṃ vigrahaṃ kṛtvā *sarvābharaḥabhūṣitāḥ* // 6.116.29
- tataḥ *kāñcanacitrāṅgaḥ kiṅkiṇīśatabhūṣitāḥ* /  
*taruṇādityasaṃkāśo* vaidūryamayakūbaraḥ // 6.90.5
- tato viprā *mahātmānaḥ* sāgnihotrāḥ *samāhitāḥ* ;  
saputradārāḥ *Kākutstham* anvagacchan *mahāmatim* || 7.99.12

The expression *hite rataḥ* (-tam, -tā) (v – v –) occurs 30 times at the end of b and d :

tava-	hite rata	(1)
tasya-	„ „	(1)
pitṛ-	„ „	(1)
sarva-	„ „	(2)
priya-	„ „	(4)
guru-	„ „	(1)
bhartṛ-	„ „	(2)
Rāghavasya-	„ „	(1)
lokasyāśya-	„ „	(1)
prajānām ca-	„ „	(3)
sarvaloka-	„ „	(2)
sarvabhūta-	„ „	(9)
prajānām ahite rata		(1)
bhūtānām ahite rata		(1)

Examples :

- devadeva *mahādeva* lokasyāśya *hite rata* /  
surāṇām praṇipātena prasādaṃ kartum arhasi // 1.35.9
- *evam uktas tu* vacanaṃ Bharadvājena *Rāghavaḥ* /  
*pratyuvāca* subham vākyam Rāmaḥ *sarvahite rataḥ* // 2.48.21
- Vaidehīm ca *mahābhāgām* Lakṣmaṇam ca *mahāratham* /  
tāpasam niyatāhāraṃ *sarvabhūtahite ratam* || 3.37.8
- *evam uktā* Hanumatā tāpasī *dharmacāriṇī* /  
*pratyuvāca* Hanūmantam *sārvabhūtahite ratā* // 4.50.9
- tāsū caiva prasuptāsū Sītā *bhartṛhite ratā* /  
vilapya karuṇam dīnā praśuśoca *suduhkhita* // 5.56.74
- *tayos tad vacanaṃ śrutvā* Rāmo *Daśarathātmajaḥ* /  
*abravīt* prahasam vākyam *sarvabhūtahite rataḥ* // 6.10.16

Except in the case of verbal roots ending in -ā (like *dā*, *dhā*, *vā* and *sthā*), the future in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is generally *ṣet*, i.e. uses the thematic -i- before the terminations. Metrically this brings about a clear division between the nine forms of the conjugation. In the first half of a *pāda* the future is used indiscriminately. But in the second half its use is rigidly governed by the metre. Thus :

end of a and c : v — — —  
-iṣyāmi -iṣyāvaḥ -iṣyāmaḥ  
-iṣyanti

end of b and d : v — v —  
-iṣyasi -iṣyathaḥ -iṣyatha  
-iṣyati -iṣyataḥ

Limiting ourselves to the most frequently used verbs we can draw the following table :

end of a and c		end of b and d	
bhaviṣyāmi	(8)	bhaviṣyasi	(22)
bhaviṣyāmaḥ	(3)	bhaviṣyatha	(2)
bhaviṣyanti	(10)	bhaviṣyati	(112)
		bhaviṣyataḥ	(2)
gamiṣyāmi	(50)	gamiṣyasi	(22)
gamiṣyāvaḥ	(2)	gamiṣyathaḥ	(3)
gamiṣyāmaḥ	(7)	gamiṣyatha	(5)
gamiṣyanti	(5)	gamiṣyati	(27)
		gamiṣyataḥ	(2)
kariṣyāmi	(14)	kariṣyasi	(17)
kariṣyāmaḥ	(4)	kariṣyati	(17)
kariṣyanti	(5)	kariṣyataḥ	(4)
vadhiṣyāmi	(14)	vadhiṣyati	(4)
vadhiṣyāmaḥ	(2)		
vadhiṣyanti	(1)		

As an example of a verbal root ending in -ā we have the verb *pra-dā* :

pradāsyāmi	(12)	pradāsyasi	(1)
pradāsyanti	(1)	pradāsyati	(3)

In the following examples verbs other than those listed above will also be illustrated.

— hanta te *kathayiṣyāmi* śṛṇu tattvena *Rāghava* /  
yasyaitad āśramapadaṃ śaptaṃ kopān *mahātmanā* // 1.47.14



- dāśāstvānugamiṣyanti dhanvināḥ susaṃāhitāḥ /  
aham cānugamiṣyāmi rājaputra mahāyaśaḥ // 2.79.6
- adyemām bhakṣaviṣyāmi paśyatas tava mānuṣīm /  
tvayā saha cariṣyāmi nihsapatnā yathāsukham // 3.17.16
- samartho nāsmi te dātum yuddham yuddhaviśārada /  
śrūyatām abhidhasyāmi yas te yuddham pradāsyati // 4.11.11
- saganam Rāvaṇam hatvā Rāghavo Raghunandanah /  
tvām ādāya varārohe svapuram pratiyāsyati // 5.37.42
- adya karma kariṣyāmi yallokāḥ sacarācarāḥ /  
sadevāḥ kathayiṣyanti yāvad bhūmir dhariṣyati // 6.88.55
- aham evāsyā dāsyāmi paramam varam uttamam /  
ataḥ prabhṛti vajrasya māmāvadhyo bhaviṣyati // 7.36.12

The periphrastic perfect in the 3rd person singular and plural with the terminations *-āmāsa* and *-āmāsuḥ* (— — —) is often used in the first half of a *pāda*. When used in the second half of a *pāda* it always belongs to a or c, as its metrical pattern indicates.

At the end of a and c the periphrastic perfect occurs 152 times. Here are the most frequent instances :

cintayāmāsa (14)	varayāmāsa (3)
preṣayāmāsa (11)	vāsayāmāsa (3)
janayāmāsa (6)	codayāmāsa (3)
darśayāmāsa (6)	chādayāmāsa (3)
pātayāmāsa (6)	bhartsayāmāsa (3)
yojayāmāsa (5)	āśvāsayāmāsa (3)
pūrayāmāsa (5)	sāntvayāmāsa (3)
pāṭayāmāsa (5)	drāvayāmāsa (3)
rocayāmāsa (4)	sthāpayāmāsa (2)
kārayāmāsa (4)	utthāpayāmāsa (2)
vedayāmāsa (4)	pūjayāmāsa (2)

In Chapter 3 the use of the reduplicated perfect followed by a monosyllabic enclitic at the end of b and d has been illustrated in the case of (*praty*)*uvāca ha*. This is now extended to any reduplicated perfect with the metrical pattern v—v followed by the enclitics *ha*, *ca* or *saḥ*.

This device is profusely used by the bards to fill the end of their lines with the proper metrical pattern v—v—. Including the numerous examples of (*praty*)*uvāca ha* listed in Chapter 3 the reduplicated perfect

followed by a monosyllabic enclitic .occurs 300 times at the end of b and d. The most frequent instances are given below :

(praty)uvāca ha (ca, sah) (100)	jaghāna ha (ca, sah) (8)
dadarśa ,, (24)	jahāra ,, (6)
papāta ,, (20)	vilalāpa ,, (6)
jagāma ,, (19)	dideśa ,, (5)
cacāra ,, (10)	śaśāka ,, (5)
babhūva ,, (9)	(pra)śaśaṃsa ,, (4)
	nananda ,, (3)
(pra)viveśa ,, (13)	
nanāda ,, (9)	vavarṣa ,, (3)
cakāra ,, (8)	mamāra ,, (2)
mumoca ,, (8)	mumoha ,, (2)

#### Illustrations :

- ityetaḍ *vacanaṃ śrutvā* surāṇāṃ Viṣṇur ātmavān /  
pitaram *rocayāmāsa tadā Daśaratham nṛpam* // 1.15.7
- tataḥ sa rāja Janakaḥ sacivān *vyādideśa ha* /  
dhanur āniyatāṃ divyaṃ *gandhamālyavibhūṣitam* // 1.15.7
- tad divyaṃ *rājaśārdūlūḥ* satkṛtaṃ *mālyabhūṣitam* /  
Rāmāya *darśayāmāsa* Saumitriḥ sarvam āyudham // 2.28.16
- sā pādāmūle *Kaikeyyā* Mantharā *nipapāta ha* /  
niḥśvasantī suduḥkhārtā kṛpaṇaṃ *vilalāpa ca* // 2.72.24
- supṛitas tena vākyena Lakṣmaṇasya *mahādyutiḥ* /  
vimṛśan *rocayāmāsa* deśaṃ *sarvagūṇānvitam* // 3.14.8
- prasthitam daṇḍakāraṇyaṃ yā mām *anujagāma ha* /  
kva sā Lakṣmaṇa *Vaidehī* yāṃ hitvā tvam *ihāgataḥ* // 3.56.2
- tām evaṃ bruvatīm Tārāṃ *tārādhipanibhānanām* /  
Vālī *nirbhartsayāmāsa* vacanaṃ *cedam abravīt* // 4.16.1
- *Rāmasya vacanaṃ śrutvā* harṣapauruṣavardhanam /  
Sugrīvaḥ *pūjayāmāsa* Rāghavam *praśaśaṃsa ca* // 4.11.1
- plavamānaṃ tu taṃ dr̥ṣṭvā Siṃhikā nāma *rākṣasī* /  
manasā *cintayāmāsa* pravṛddhā *kāmarūpiṇī* // 5.1.166
- sa muhūrtam iva dhyātvā *bāṣparyākulekṣaṇaḥ* /  
Sītām āśṛityā tejasvī Hanumān *vilalāpa ha* // 5.14.2
- tad apriyaṃ dīnamukhā Rāvaṇasya *niśācarāḥ* /  
kṛtsnaṃ *nivedayāmāsur* yathāvad *vākyakovidāḥ* // 6.41.11

- sa vṛkṣeṇa hatas tena sakrodhena *mahātmanā* /  
 rākṣaso vānarendreṇa *papāta ca mamāṇa ca* // 6.44.29  
 —sa tasyāṃ *janayāmāsa* Heti *rākṣasapuṅgavaḥ* /  
 putraṃ *putravatāṃ śreṣṭho* Vidyutkeśa iti śrutam // 7.4.17  
 —*evam uktvā Daśagrīvaḥ* saṅgamaṃ tasyādideśa ha /  
 caturdaśa *sahasrāṇi* rakṣasāṃ *kāmarūpiṇām* // 7.24.33

16

The infinitive in *-tum* followed by a trisyllabic verb beginning with a vowel offers an ample scope for the filling of the second half of all *pādas*. When the metrical pattern of the trisyllabic verb is — — — the formula is used in the second half of a and c ; when its metrical pattern is — v — the formula is used in the second half of b and d. This is how the formula is used in the *Rāmāyaṇa* :

end of a and c

v — — —

-tum ic chā mi  
 „ ic chā vaḥ  
 „ ic chā maḥ  
 „ ic chan tī  
 „ ic chan tīm

end of b and d

v — v —

-tum ic cha si  
 „ ic cha tha  
 „ ic cha ti  
 „ ic cha taḥ  
 ut sa he  
 „ ar ha si  
 „ ar ha tha  
 „ ar ha ti  
 „ ar ha thaḥ

At the end of a and c the formula occurs 45 times. The main instances are :

*icchāmi* (*icchāvaḥ*, etc)

draṣṭum	„	(8)
jñātum	„	(6)
śrotum	„	(5)
hantum	„	(3)
yaṣṭum	„	(2)
kartum	„	(2)

*icchāmi (icchāvah, etc)*

gantum	„	(2)
veditum	„	(2)
praṣṭum	„	(1)
pātum	„	(1)
netum	„	(1)
vaktum	„	(1)
ākhyātum	„	(1)
tyaktum	„	(1)

At the end of b and d the formula occurs 245 times. The main instances are :

*utsahe**icchasi (icchatī, etc)**arhasi (arhati, etc)*

kartum	„	(29)
gantum	„	(19)
dātum	„	(17)
vaktum	„	(16)
jñātum	„	(14)
draṣṭum	„	(13)
bhavitum	„	(10)
netum	„	(8)
jīvitum	„	(8)
vartayitum	„	(6)
śocitum	„	(5)
kṣantum	„	(5)
vartitum	„	(5)
anveṣitum	„	(4)
ājñāpayitum	„	(4)
dharṣayitum	„	(3)
hartum	„	(3)
hantum	„	(3)
trātum	„	(3)
śaṃsitum	„	(3)
cintayitum	„	(3)
nāśayitum	„	(3)
ākhyātum	„	(3)

Illustrations :

- svaputraṃ *rājaśārdūla Rāmaṃ satyaṣarākramam* /  
kākapakṣadharam śūram jyeṣṭham me *dātum arhasi* // 1.18.8
- tāṃ kathāṃ *śrotum icchāmi* vistareṇa ca *muithili* |  
yathānubhūtaṃ kārtsnyena tan me tvam *vaktum arhasi* // 2.110.24
- aham hi *puruṣavyāghrāvapaśyan Rāmalakṣmaṇau* /  
kena śaktiprabhāvena rājyaṃ *rakṣitum utsahe* // 2.67.11
- agre *niryātum icchāmi* paulastyānāṃ *mahātmanām* |  
vadhārthaṃ durvinītasya Rāmasya *raṇakovidāḥ* // 3.21.12
- tvām āsādyā *mahātmānaṃ dharmajñaṃ dharmavatsalam* /  
arthitvān nātha *vakṣyāmas* tacca naḥ *kṣantum arhasi* // 3.5.9
- imānyabhyavahāryāṇi mūlāni ca *phalāni ca* |  
bhuktvā pītvā ca pāṇiyaṃ sarvaṃ me *vaktum arhatha* // 4.50.19
- rākṣasīvaśam āpannā bhartsyamānā *sudāruṇam* /  
cintayantī suduḥkhārtā nāhaṃ *jīvitum utsahe* // 5.24.4
- sakhe Rāghava *dharmajña* ripūṇāṃ api *vatsala* |  
*abhyānujñātum icchāmi* gamiṣyāmi *yathāgatam* // 6.40.56
- *evam uktas tu dharmajñaḥ pratyuvāca Vibhīṣaṇaḥ* |  
samudraṃ Rāghavo rājā śaraṇaṃ *gantum arhati* // 6.13.13
- bhagavan *vastum icchāmi* guroḥ kṛtyād *ihāgataḥ* |  
śvaḥ prabhāte *gamiṣyāmi* prati cīm vāruṇīm diśam // 7.57.4
- ehyāgaccha *raghuśreṣṭha* rājā tvam *draṣṭum icchatī* |  
gato hi Lakṣmaṇaḥ pūrvaṃ Bharataśca *mahāyaśāḥ* // 7.43.9

The perfect *upacakrame* (v v – v –) always stands at the end of b and d and has three different constructions :

– preceded by an infinitive in *-tum* it means “he began to” :

– structure 3+5 :	ākhyātum upacakrame	(11)
	vyāhartum	„ (5)
	prastbātum	„ (2)
	pravaktum	„ (2)
	vicetum	„ (2)
	sampraṣṭum	„ (1)
	āpraṣṭum	„ (1)
	vilaptum	„ (1)
	pradhyātum	„ (1)
	vidhyātum	„ (1)

— structure 2+6 :	vaktum evopacakrame	(2)
	praṣṭum „	(1)
	dātum „	(1)
	praṣṭum samupacakrame	(5)
	yaṣṭum „	(1)
	sraṣṭum „	(1)
	snātum „	(1)

—preceded by a dative it means “he set out for” :

gamanāyopacakrame	(6)
maithunāyopacakrame	(5)

—preceded by an accusative it means “he approached” :

— structure 3+5 : bhartāram upacakrame	(1)
Sugrīvam „	(1)
taṁ deśam „	(3)
samīpam „	(1)
mṛgayām „	(1)
saras tad „	(1)

A few examples :

- tataḥ prītamanā Rāmo Viśvāmitraṁ mahāmuniṁ |  
abhivādya mahāteja gamanāyopacakrame || 1.26.25
- sā tvevaṁ uktā Vaidehī Anasūyānasūyayā |  
pratipūjya vaco mandaṁ pravaktum upacakrame || 2.110.1
- ityuktā rākṣasendrena rākṣasī krodhamūrchitā |  
tato Rāmaṁ yathānyāyam ākhyātum upacakrame || 3.32.4
- tasyās tad vacanaṁ śrutvā Hanumān mārutātmajaḥ |  
ārjavena yathātattvam ākhyātum upacakrame || 4.51.3
- tasyās tad vacanaṁ śrutvā Hanumān hariyūthapaḥ |  
Sītāyāḥ śokadīnāyāḥ samīpam upacakrame || 5.32.8
- tāṁ tupārśve sthitāṁ prahvāṁ Rāmaḥ samprekṣya Maithilīm |  
hrdayāntargatakrodho vyāhartum upacakrame || 6.103.1
- prāptapūjo Daśagrīvo madhuveśmani vīryavān |  
tatra caikāṁ niśām uṣya gamanāyopacakrame || 7.25.49

Among the numerous formulae analyzed so far no mention has been made of similes, although a fair number of them have been listed. Thus in Chapter 6, the compounds ending in *-samatejas*; in Chapter 9, the compounds ending in *-tulyavikrama* and in *-tulyaparākrama*; and in Chapter 12, the compounds ending in *-samaprabha* and those ending in *-saṅkāśa* and in *-sannibha*. In this chapter a few types of similes are studied which offer instances of traditional formulae and, at the same time, illustrate some of the simple themes which the epic is fond of repeating. This, therefore, is not an exhaustive study of similes in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but only a survey of those similes which metrically fit the pattern of *pādas* b and d. Traditional similes in the oral tradition are usually terse. Elaborate similes may be taken as definite indications of the ornate literary style and should be considered as accretions added by scribes at the time when the oral epic was put into writing.

Keeping in mind the metrical pattern of the second half of b and d (v – v –), we shall limit ourselves to the following types of similes :

1. those made of a compound ending with *-upama*. The word combining with *-upama* always ends with *a* or *ā* so as to give the *sandhi* *-opama* (– v –).
2. similes ending with *yathā* and *iva*. The previous word always ends in a short penultimate and a long ultimate. The resulting *pāda* thus appears as follows :

x x x x v – ya thā  
i va

when *iva* stands at the end of the *pāda* the last syllable of the previous word must be either a long syllable ending in a consonant or a plural *-ā* losing its *visarga* before *iva*. Thus we have *krośantī kurarī yathā* (where *iva* cannot be used) whereas in *krośantīm kurarīm iva, yathā* could replace *iva*. Again in *chinnā vanalatā iva, chinnā* and *vanalatā* must be in the plural. With the singular we can only have *chinna vanalata yathā*.

3. similes with *iva* standing as the fifth and sixth syllables of the *pāda* : in this case the second syllable of *iva* must become long either by

being followed by a word beginning with a double consonant or by sandhi with the initial vowel of the following word. Thus :

x x x x v—v—  
i va dvi pa  
i va dru ma  
i vā na la  
i vo ra ga

4. similes with *iva* standing as the fourth and fifth syllables of the *pāda* :  
in this case *iva* is followed by a word beginning with a single consonant and having the metrical pattern —v—. Thus :

x x x x v—v—  
i va pā va ka  
i va pan na ga

5. similes with *iva* standing as the third and fourth syllables of the *pāda* :  
in this case *iva* is followed by a four-syllable word having the metrical pattern v—v—

Thus :  
x x x v v—v—  
i va hu tā śa na  
i va pi tā ma ha

We shall now choose some of the most common *upamānas* and analyze them in their metrical and thematic functions.

#### 1. “like a mountain”

Metrically the comparison occurs at the end of b and d in the following forms :

x x x x v—v—  
par va to pa ma (26)  
a ca lo pa ma (2)  
i vā ca la (11)  
i va parva ta (13)  
i va ma hā gi ri (2)  
i va ma hā ca la (1)

Thematically the comparison conveys the idea of hugeness or power or of both. The *upameya* may be an elephant, a heap of food or a hero. The comparison may also suggest the way in which a hero falls in battle : “like a mountain struck by lightning”.



Examples :

- Rāvaṇa in his splendour :
- *snigdhavaidūryasamkāśam taptakāñcanakuṇḍalam |*  
*subhujam śukladaśanam mahāsyam parvatopamam || 3.30.9*
- Jaṭāyu lying dead :
- *taṃ gr̥dhraṃ prekṣya tāmṛākṣam gatāsum acalopamam |*  
*Rāmaḥ sabahubhir duḥkhair dīnaḥ Saumitrim abravīt || 3.64.19*
- the fall of Mahāpārśva :
- *sa svayā gadayā bhinno vikīṛṇadaśanekṣaṇaḥ |*  
*nipapāta Mahāpārśvo vajrāhata ivācalaḥ || 6.58.53*
- Lakṣmaṇa with the three arrows of Indrajit stuck in his forehead :
- *taiḥ pr̥ṣatkair lalāṭasthaiḥ susubhe Raghunandanaḥ |*  
*raṇāgre samaraślāghī triśṛṅga iva parvataḥ || 6.78.7*
- Lakṣmaṇa's arrows tear up the demons :
- *te śarāḥ śikhisaṃkāśā nipatāntāḥ samāhitāḥ |*  
*rākṣasān dārayāmāsur vajrā iva mahāgirīn || 6.77.3*

2. "like a cloud"

Metrically the comparison appears at the end of b and d in the following forms : x x x x v – v –

ja	la	do	pa	ma	(5)
ja	la	dharo	pa	ma	(1)
ja	la	do	ya	thā	(3)
to	ya	do	ya	thā	(1)
ja	la	dā	i	va	(1)
i	vāmbu	da			(15)
i	va	to	ya	da	(13)

Thematically the loud clamour of a hero is often compared to the rumbling of a cloud. A cloud lit up by lightning is an image of splendour. The showers pouring from a cloud are like the arrows released by a warrior. A cloud driven by the wind suggests the flight of a hero.

Examples :

- Kabandha's clamour as he falls :
- *sa papāta mahābāhus chinnabāhur mahāsvanaḥ |*  
*khaṃ ca gāṃ ca diśaścaiva nādayaj jalado yathā || 3.66.7*

- The monkeys' cry of triumph :  
— tāṃ dr̥ṣṭvā *ghorasamkāśāṃ śaktim bhagnāṃ Hanumatā* /  
prahṛṣṭā vānaragaṇā vinedur *jaladā iva* || 6.58.33
- Bharata's army covering the earth :  
— sāgaraughanibhā senā *Bharatasya mahātmanah* /  
mahīm *saṃchādayāmāsa* prāvṛṣi dyām *ivāmbudah* || 2.87.4
- Lakṣmaṇa showering arrows on Atikāya :  
— athainaṃ śaradhārābhir dhārābhir *iva toyadah* /  
abhyavarṣata *saṃkruddho* Lakṣmaṇo *Rāvanātmajam* || 6.59.92

### 3. "like a (poisonous) snake"

Metrically the comparison occurs at the end of b and d in the following forms : x x x x v — v —

sarpa	vi	ṣo	pa	ma	(1)
ā	śī	vi	ṣo	pa	ma (15)
panna	gā	ya	thā		(2)
panna	gān	i	va		(3)
	i	vo	ra	ga	(8)
i	va	panna	ga		(10)
i	va	ma	ho	ra	ga (1)

Thematically the deadly power of arrows and other weapons is compared to that of a poisonous snake. In another context the fear inspired by Garuḍa among serpents suggests the fear of heroes before a formidable enemy.

### Examples :

- Daśaratha relates how he killed the young hermit :  
— tato'haṃ śaram uddhṛtya diptam *āśīviṣopamam* /  
amuñcam niśitam bāṇam aham *āśīviṣopamam* || 2.57.17
- Kumbhakarna devours monkeys :  
— bāhubhyāṃ vānarān sarvān pragṛhya sa *mahābalaḥ* /  
bhakṣayāmāsa *saṃkruddho* Garuḍaḥ *pannagān iva* || 6.55.27
- Rāma to Rāvaṇa : "May the birds tear up your entrails" :  
— adya madbāṇabhinnasya gatāsoḥ patitasya te /  
karṣantvantrāṇi patagā garutmanta *ivoragān* || 6.92.22

— Rāma seeing Daśaratha's condition is frightened :

— tad apūrvam narapater dṛṣṭvā rūpam bhayāvaham /

Rāmo'pi bhayam āpannaḥ padā *sprṣṭveva pannagam* // 2.16.4

— At times the hissing of a snake is the image of the breathing of a hero in fury. Thus Lakṣmaṇa :

— tataḥ śaram Daśarathiḥ sandhāyāmitrakaśanaḥ /

sasarja rākṣasendrāya *kruddhaḥ sarpa iva śvasan* // 6.76.1

#### 4. "like fire" or "like a flame of fire"

Metrically the comparison occurs at the end of b and d in the following forms : x x x x v — v —

jva la no pa ma (1)

pā va ko pa ma (4)

ag ni śi khopa ma (8)

a na la śi khopa ma (2)

a na lo ya thā (1)

jva la naṃya thā (1)

ag ni śi khām i va (4)

i vā na la (20)

i vāgni nā (5)

i va pā va ka (32)

i va hu tā śa na (4)

Thematically the comparison suggests effulgence, fury, destruction. Flames often are the images of arrows and smouldering fire is the image of exhaustion or approaching death.

Examples :

— the 14000 demons killed by Rāma's arrows :

— *caturdaśasahasrāṇi rakṣasāṃ bhīmakarmanām* /

nihatāni janasthāne *śarair agniśikhopamaih* // 5.14.9

— Sumālin looks at Kuvera :

— tam dṛṣṭvāmarasaṃkāśaṃ gacchantam *pāvakopamam* / 7.9.3

— Ahalyā :

— prayatnān nirmītāṃ dhātrā divyāṃ māyāmayīm iva /

dhūmenābhiparītāṅgīm dīptām *agniśikhām iva* // 1.48.14

— R̥ṣyaśṛṅga :

— āsādyā taṃ *dvijaśreṣṭhaṃ* Romapāḍasamīpagam /  
r̥ṣiputraṃ dadarśādau *dīpyamānam ivānalam* // 1.10.15

— A warrior rushing to his doom is often compared to a moth attracted by fire. Thus Aṅgada speaking of Kumbhakarṇa :

— na Kumbhakarṇaḥ *Kākutsīhaṃ* dṛṣṭvā jīvan *gamiṣyati* /  
*dīpyamānam ivāsādyā pataṅgo jvalanam iva* // 6.54.23

— Khara rushing on his chariot towards Rāma :

— tataḥ sūryanikāśena rathena mahatā Kharah /  
āsasāda raṇe Rāmaṃ *pataṅga iva pāvakaṃ* // 3.27.13

— Mahodara attacks the monkeys' army :

— evam uktas tathetyuktvā rākṣasendraṃ Mahodaraḥ /  
praviveśārisenāṃ sa *pataṅga iva pāvakaṃ* // 6.85.6.

— The same image is at times used in different contexts. Thus the fire on the altar is used as an image to describe Kaikeyī, Vedavati and Rāma :

— iti praśasyamānā sā *Kaikeyīm idam abravīt* /  
śayānāṃ śayane śubhre *vedyām agniśikhām iva* // 2.9.40

— evam eṣā *mahābhāgā* martyeṣūtpadyate punaḥ /  
kṣetre halamukhagraste *vedyām agniśikhopamā* // 7.17.30

— evam uktaḥ kuśastīrṇe tīre nadanadīpateḥ /  
saṃviveśa tadā Rāmo *vedyām iva hutāśanaḥ* // 6.13.23

##### 5. “like the god of Death”

Metrically the comparison occurs at the end of b and d in the following forms : x x x x v — v —

kā lānta ko pa ma (4)

kā lānta ka ya mo pa ma (3)

i vān ta ka (14)

Thematically it always expresses an impending doom.

Examples :

— Prahasta with his army :

— sāgarapratimaughena vṛtas tena balena saḥ /  
Prahasto nirayau tūrṇaṃ kruddhaḥ *kālāntakopamaḥ* // 6.45.31

— Kumbhakarṇa :

— iṣat samutkaṭo mattas *tejobalasamanvitaḥ* /  
Kumbhakarṇo babhau hr̥ṣṭaḥ *kālāntakayamopamaḥ* // 6.48.83

– Khara :

– tam rathastham dhanuṣpāṇīm rākṣaṣam paryavasthitam /  
dadṛśuḥ sarvabhūtāni pāśahastam ivāntakam || 3.27.11

– Lakṣmaṇa :

– tatas tam jvalitam ghoram Lakṣmaṇaḥ śaram āhitam /  
Atikāyāya cikṣepa kāladaṇḍam ivāntakaḥ || 6.59.85

#### 6. “like Vāsava”

Metrically the comparison occurs at the end of b and d in the following forms : x x x x v – v –

Vā sa vo pa ma (2)

Vā savam ya thā (4)

i va Vā sa va (10)

Thematically this comparison with Vāsava (Indra) is used in various contexts. It usually compares the relationship between two heroes with that of Indra with another mythic personage.

Examples :

– Sumantra addresses Rāma :

– tataḥ Sumantraḥ Kākutstham prānjaltv vākyam abravīt /  
vinīto vinayajñaśca Mātaliḥ Vāsavam yathā || 2.35.9

– Daśaratha welcomes Viśvāmitra :

– teṣāṃ tad vacanam śrutvā sapurodhāḥ samāhitaḥ /  
pratyuj jagāma samhr̥ṣṭo Brahmāṇam iva Vāsavaḥ || 1.17.27

– Bharata greets Rāma on his return from Laṅkā :

– so’bhivādya mahātmānam sākṣād dharmam ivāparam /  
Rāghavam Bharataḥ śrīmān Brahmāṇam iva Vāsavaḥ || 7.91.15

#### 7. “like an elephant”

Metrically the comparison occurs at the end of b and d in the following forms : x x x x v – v –

i va dvi pa (13)

i va kuñ ja ra (11)

i va ma hā ga ja (3)

i va ma hā dvi pa (1)

Thematically the comparison conveys the idea of strength either victorious or brought under control through harrassment.

## Examples :

- Bharata struck down by Guha's suspicions :
- *pratyāśvasya muhūrtaṃ tu kālaṃ paramadurmanāḥ /*  
*papāta sahasā totirair hṛdi viddha iva dvipaḥ // 2.81.3*
- Vālin brought down by Rāma :
- *bāṣpaśamruddhakaṇṭhastu Vālī sārtaravaḥ śanaiḥ /*  
*uvāca Rāmaṃ samprekṣya paṅkalagna iva dvipaḥ // 4.18.45*
- Monkeys attack Kumbhakrṇa :
- *nijaghnūḥ paramakruddhāḥ samadā iva kuñjarāḥ /*  
*prāṃśubhir giriśṛṅgaiśca śilābhiśca mahābalāḥ // 6.54.8*
- Khara gives a tough time to Rāma :
- *tato nālīkanārācais tikṣṇāgraiśca vikarṇibhiḥ /*  
*ajaghāna raṇe Rāmaṃ totirair iva mahādvipam // 3.27.10*

## 8. "like the sun"

The comparison occurs at the end of b and d in the following metrical position :

x	x	x	x	v	—	v	—
				bhāska	ro	pa	ma (1)
			sūrya	i	vo	di	ta (1)
	di	vā	ka	ra	i	vo	di ta (1)
			i	va	bhāska	ra	(13)

Thematically the comparison conveys the idea of brightness dispelling the darkness of sorrow.

## Examples :

- Lakṣmaṇa dispelling Rāma's grief :
- *harāmi vīryād duḥkhaṃ te tamaḥ sūrya ivoditaḥ /*  
*devī paśyatu me vīryaṃ Rāghavaścaiva paśyatu // 2.18.15*
- Hanumat sees Rāvana :
- *rākṣasādhipatiṃ cāpi dadarśa kapisattamaḥ /*  
*tejobalasamāyuktaṃ tapantaṃ iva bhāskaram // 5.46.57*
- Prayer of the gods to Viṣṇu :
- *bhayeṣvabhayado'smākaṃ nānyo'sti bhavatā samaḥ /*  
*nuda tvaṃ no bhayaṃ deva nīhāram iva bhāskaraḥ // 7.6-16*

9. "like a tree"

Metrically the comparison appears at the end of b and d in the following forms : x x x x v – v –

pā da po ya thā (1)

i va dru ma (10)

Thematically the comparison always conveys the idea of disastrous fall or defeat.

Examples :

–The fall of Prahasta :

–sa gatāsur gataśrīko gatasattvo gatendriyaḥ /  
papāta sabasā bhūmau ehinnamūla iva drumah // 6.46.46

–Lakṣmaṇa intending to kill Bharata :

–adya putraṃ hataṃ saṃkhye Kaikeyī rājyakāmukā /  
mayā paśyet suduḥkhārtā hastibhagnam iva drumam // 2.90.20

10. The shedding of blood on the battle field is vividly suggested by two similes : cascades flowing from a mountain and blossoming *kiṃśuka* trees (trees with red blossoms)

Examples :

–Kumbhakarṇa bleeding from his wounds :

–karṇanāsāvihīnas tu Kumbhakarṇo mahābalaḥ /  
rarāja śoṇitotsikto giriḥ prasaravaṇair iva // 6.55.70

–The monkeys harrassed by Indrajit's arrows :

–tato jvalanasaṃkāśaiḥ śitair vānarayūthapāḥ /  
tāḍitāḥ Śakrajīdbāṇaih praphullā iva kiṃśukāḥ // 6.60.34

11. A few more similes are listed here as a complement of what precedes.

–*Mahendravaruṇopama* (6) chiefly of Rāma

–*nīlāñjanacayopama* (5) of *rākṣasas*

–*surasutopamā* (8) of Sītā

–*karīkaropama* (3) of thighs and arms

–*amṛtopama* (5) of food

–*pravāte kadālī yathā* (4) of a woman trembling out of fear or old age

–*divi devapatīr yathā* (2) of a king in his capital

–*krośanti kurarī yathā* (3) of a lamenting woman

- *pūrṇacandram ivoditam* (2) of a beautiful face  
— *samudra iva parvaṇi*(*parvasu*) (7) of turmoil  
— *Indrasyevāmarāvati* (3) of a great city
- Palaces are compared to the houses of the gods :  
— *Purandaragr̥hopama*, *Mahendrabhavanopama*, *devagr̥hopamam*,  
*Kuverabhavanam yathā*
- Rāvaṇa capturing Sītā : *Budhaḥ khe rohinīm iva*  
*grahaḥ khe* „  
*khe graho* „
- Sītā captured by Rāvaṇa : *pīditām iva rohinīm*  
*sagrahām* „ „  
*sātāṅkām* „ „

The use of terse traditional similes certainly gave to the numerous scribes who copied and re-copied the manuscripts a golden opportunity to add their own lines. One simile suggesting another, a long chain of comparisons is gradually built up or, to use a comparison, a whole garden grows around a simple flower, hiding its humble beauty under a profusion of brilliant colours. One typical example is found in 5.17. Daśagrīva has gone to the Aśokavanikā to see Sītā. In 5.17.4 we have the main clause :

- Daśagrīvas tu Vaidehīm rakṣitām rākṣasīgaṇaiḥ .  
dadarśa dīnaṃ duḥkhārtām nāvaṃ sannām ivārṇave //

Then, from 5 to 20, an accumulation of similes, all referring to *Vaidehīm*. A few illustrations will suffice :

- sannām iva mahākīrtiṃ śraddhām iva vimānitām ;  
prajñām iva parikṣiṇām āśāṃ pratihatām iva //  
— āyatīm iva vidhvastām ājñām pratihatām iva ;  
dīptām iva diśāṃ kāle pūjām apahr̥tām iva //  
— padminīm iva vidhvastām hataśūrāṃ camūm iva /  
prabhām iva tapodhvastām upakṣiṇām ivāpagām // 5.17.10-12

This kind of ornate style is typical of the *Sundara-kāṇḍa*, not only in the excessive use of similes, but also, as we shall show later, in its fondness for elaborate descriptions. Of all the *kāṇḍas*, it is the *Sundara-kāṇḍa* which has suffered most at the hands of scribes convinced of their literary talent.



18

The times of day and night belong to the category of simple themes and are indicated by short phrases covering usually one *pāda* : according to their metrical pattern they belong either to a and c or to b and d.

*End of night or dawn*

a and c		b and d	
x x rātryāṃ vyatītāyāṃ	(7)	triyāmā yāti śarvarī	(1)
prabhātāyāṃ tu śarvaryāṃ	(5)	sā rātrir vyatyavartata	(1)
„ rajanyāṃ tu	(1)	śarvarī sātyavartata	(1)
niśāyāṃ suprabhātāyāṃ	(1)	vyāpāyād rajanī śivā	(1)
rajanyāṃ „	(1)	purvā sandhyā pravartate	(1)
vyatītā rājanī śīghram	(1)		
prabhātāṃ rajanīm dr̥ṣṭvā	(1)		
tataḥ prabhātasamaye	(2)		

*Sunrise*

a and c		b and d	
tataḥ prabhāte vimale	(4)	x x x udito raviḥ	(1)
udite vimale sūrye	(1)	uditaśca divākaraḥ	(1)
prabhāte „ „	(1)		
vimale'bhyudite sūrye	(1)		
(sobhante)'bhyudite sūrye	(1)		

In a few cases the formula covers two *pādas* (a+b or c+d) :

- suprabhātā niśā Rāma pūrvā sandhyā pravartate
- gatā bhāgavatī rātrir ahaḥ śivam upasthitam
- bhāskarodayakālo'yaṃ gatā bhagavatī niśā
- vyatītāyāṃ tu śarvaryāṃ ādityasyodaye tataḥ
- tasyāṃ rātryāṃ vyatītāyāṃ vimale sūryamaṇḍale

*Noon*

a and c		b and d	
tato'rdhadvase prāpte	(3)	gate'rdhadvase tadā	(1)
		prāpto madhyam divākaraḥ	(1)
		madhyādityagate'hani	(1)

*End of day and sunset*

a and c	"	b and d
astam dinakare yāte	(1)	lambamāne divākare (3)
te'stam gate dinakare	(1)	lambate ravimaṇḍalam (1)
nivṛttamātre divase	(1)	sūrye'stam samupāgate (1)
prapannā rajanī puṇyā	(1)	sandhyākālo'tivartate (1)
tato'stam gata āditye	(1)	vrajatyastam divākare (1)
astam prāpte dinakare	(1)	dr̥ṣṭvā rātrim upasthitām (1)
atha rātryām pravṛttāyām	(1)	tataḥ sandhyā pravartate (1)
udite vimale candre	(1)	

*Midnight*

a and c

gato'rdharātraḥ Kākutstha (1)  
tato'rdharātrasamaye (1)

Sumantra awakens Rāma :

— *gatā bhagavatī rātrir ahaḥ śivam upasthitam /*  
*budhyasva nṛpaśārdūla kuru kāryam anantaram // 2.13.18*

Rāma calls Lakṣmaṇa : morning has come and they will cross the Gaṅgā :

— *prabhātāyām tu śarvaryām pṛthuvakṣā mahāyāśāḥ /*  
*uvāca Rāmaḥ Saumitriṁ Lakṣmaṇam śubhalakṣṇam //*  
— *bhāskarodayakalo'yam gatā bhagavatī niśā /*  
*tarāma Jāhnavīm saumya śighragām sāgaraṁgamām // 2.46.1-3*

Rāma speaks to Vasiṣṭha :

— *prabhātāyām tu śarvaryām pṛthuvakṣā mahāyāśāḥ /*  
*Rāmaḥ kamalapatrākṣaḥ purodhasam athābravīt // 7.99.1*

Viśvāmitra departs from Janaka's capital :

— *atha rātryām vyatītāyām Viśvāmitro mahāmuniḥ /*  
*āpṛcchya tau ca rājānau jagāmottaraparvatam // 1.73.1*

The monkeys set out at night to set Laṅkā on fire :

— *tato'stam gata āditya raudre tasmin niśāmukhe*  
*Lankām abhimukhā solkā jagmus te plavagaṛṣabhāḥ // 6.62.4*

In the *Bāla-kāṇḍa* Rama and Lakṣmaṇa, under the guidance of Viśvāmitra have reached the bank of the Śoṇā river. The sun is setting :

— *te'stam gate dinakare snātvā hutahutāśanāḥ /*  
*Viśvāmitram puraskṛtya niṣedur amitaujasah // 1.30.19*

Nama, then, asks Viśvāmitra to tell them the story of the place. The story covers three cantos. Night is far advanced and Viśvāmitra sends the princes to sleep so that their journey on the morrow may not be hampered :

--gato'rdharātraḥ Kākutstha kathāḥ kathayato mama /  
nidrām abhyehi bhadraṁ te mā bhūd vighne 'dhvanīha naḥ // 1.33.14

The princes then go to sleep :

— Rāmo'pi sahasaumitriḥ kiñcid āgatavismayaḥ /  
praśasya muniśārdulam nidrām samupasevate // 1.33.20

This is the easy and normal flow of the narrative. But a talented scribe could not resist the temptation to add between 33.14 and 33.20 a beautiful description of the night. It is out of context : Viśvāmitra urges the princes to take some rest. Although he is a wonderful story-teller, nowhere does he appear as a poet. But scribes are not concerned with the context. Their purple patches, however irrelevant, give them the joy of displaying their talent. Horace, in his *De Arte Poetica*, puts young poets on guard against this temptation :

Inceptis gravibus plerumque et magna professis  
purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter  
adsuitur pannus, cum lucus et ara Dianae  
et properantis aquae per amoenos ambitus agros,  
aut flumen Rhenus aut pluvius describitur arcus.  
Sed nunc non erat his locus ...(14-19)

Often works begin with gravity and with a promise of great things. Then some purple rag is stitched to them meant to shine afar : one describes the grove and the altar of Diana, the meanderings of a stream flowing across pleasant fields, or the river Rhine, or the rainbow, all things which are totally irrelevant.

Traditional oral poetry is not adverse to descriptions, but it always gives priority to the narrative. It is the story that counts and descriptions are kept in a subordinate position. *Kāvya*-writers, on the contrary, delight in description and quite often the narrative becomes for them a mere prop for their elaborate descriptions. Sophisticated scribes imbued with the

*kāvya*-spirit have tampered with the original *Rāmāyaṇa*, convinced they were that it lacked the embellishment of ornate poetry. It is chiefly in descriptive passages that they have used their technique to 'improve' on the original. It is in such passages that the two levels of composition mentioned in Chapter 1 are clearly discernible.

In the hands of learned scribes descriptions often become store-houses of sophisticated knowledge. As Hanumat approaches Laṅkā (5.2.8) he sees the city from afar. There are blossoming trees gently swaying and full of birds (5.2.11). In the two intermediate *ślokas* (5.2.9-10), the scribe, an expert in botany, succeeds in cramming the following species of trees :

— *sarala* (pinus longifolia) ; *karnikāra* (pterosperrum acerifolium) ; *kharjura* (phoenix sylvestris) ; *priyāla* (buchanania latifolia) ; *muculinda* (pterosperrum suberifolium) ; *kuṭaja* (wrightia antidysenterica) ; *ketaka* (pandanus odoratissimus) ; *priyaṅgu* (panicum italicum) ; *nīpa* (nau-clea cadamba) ; *saptacchanda* (abstonia scholaris) ; *asana* (terminalia tomentosa) ; *kovidāra* (baubinia variegata) and *karavīra* (oleander).

When the epic *śloka* proves to be too simple for artificial poetry, the scribes sit down to compose in more rigid metres in order to display their artistic skill. Thus we have in the *upajāti* metre the description of Rāvaṇa's palace (5.4) and of his inner apartments (5.6) and the often quoted description of autumn by Rāma (4.27). There is no question here of denying the quality of some of the passages just mentioned or of others of the same type. The point is that they are artificial accretions, purple patches, which stand in clear contrast to the simplicity of traditional oral poetry.

Another device used by scribes to display their competence is the use of rhetorical repetitions. This device is different from the repetition of traditional formulae with their metrical function. It is a rhetorical technique and its artificiality is obvious. It enables scribes to throw in numerous specimens of their *śāstric* proficiency. The *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* gives two illustrations of the method. Both are concerned with *artha-śāstra*.

In the first, brahmins and ministers have gathered, after the death of Daśaratha to discuss the situation of the kingdom. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa have gone to the forest and Bharata and Śatrughna have not yet returned from their holiday. It is essential that a new king be installed, for a kingdom without king cannot survive long :

— Ikṣvākūṇām ihādyaiva kaścīd rājā vidhīyatām /  
arājakaṃ hi no rāṣṭraṃ na vināśam avāpnuyāt // 2.61.7

From 61.8 to 61.21 the dangers of a kingdom without king are generously enumerated and the expression *nārājake janapade* is repeated twelve times at the beginning of the *śloka*. That the game was a favourite one can be surmised from the variants quoted in the notes where the same expression occurs again and again.

In 2.94 Bharata meets Rāma who naturally inquires about Ayodhyā and the kingdom. Then from 94.7 to 94.59, i.e. for more than fifty *ślokas*, questions pour out of Rāma's lips without interruption about the numerous details of government, with the interrogative *kaccit* repeated at least 40 times. Rāma has suddenly become an examiner in political science. We are no longer in the atmosphere of the ancient epic. The tonality is totally different : two poetical worlds are juxtaposed and never blend. In another vein but with the same incongruity we have the long description of the banquet offered by Bharadvāja to the troops of Bharata (2.85). If Dr P.L. Vaidya rejects the crow-episode as "highly inappropriate", this scene of revelling which fills the longest *sarga* of the *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* and which could have inspired Camoëns in his description of the Island of Love, is hardly called for in the context of Bharata's anguish. As to the crow-episode, G.C. Jhala, the editor of the *Sundara-kāṇḍa*, accepts it as genuine. It appears twice in this *kāṇḍa*, in *sarga* 36, where Sītā narrates it to Hanumat, and in *sarga* 65, where Hanumat reports it to Rāma.

There are cases, however, where traditional oral style and ornate poetry are so blended that it becomes difficult to sift one from the other. In the description of cities, palaces, inner apartments and hermitages, for instance, scribes have succeeded in weaving their personal compositions into the warp of traditional verses. Even Pascal's *esprit de finesse* is here reduced to conjecture

Descriptive themes make frequent use of past passive participles at the end of the *pāda*. Thus :

end of a and c	end of b and d
—upeta	śobhita
sampūrṇa	bhūṣita
ākīrṇa	anvita
	āvṛta
	sevita

Thus a city :

sarvaratnasamākīrṇām

nānāratnavibhūṣitām

udyānāmrvanopetām  
hastyaśvarathasampūrṇām

vīmānagrhaśobhitām  
narottamasamāvṛtām

a hermitage :

nānāmṛgagaṇākīrṇām

siddhacāraṇasevitām

kinnaroragasevitām

kuśacīraparikṣiptam

nānāvṛkṣasamāvṛtam

a river :

plavaiḥ krauñcaiśca sampūrṇām

varāhamṛgasevitām

hlādinīm parvatāvṛtām

puṇyām ṛṣiṇiṣevitām

There are other expressions used in the description of rivers :

śīghragām ākulāvartām

śīghragām sāgaraṅgamām

Gaṅgām tripathagām divyām

divyām tripathagām nadīm

For cities there are stereotyped expressions for b and d :

su vibhaktamahāpathām

Indrasyevāmarāvatīm

purīm devapuropamām

divi devapurīm iva

As in all ancient epics, so also in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the theme of battle and combat is the most important. Besides the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa* where it holds the place of honour, it is present in all the other *kāṇḍas*, except the *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa*. In 3.21.20-21 we have a list of the weapons carried by Khara's army of *rākṣasas* :

- mudgaraiḥ paṭṭīśair śūlaiḥ sutīkṣṇaiśca paraśvadhair /  
khaḍgaiścakraiśca hastasthair bhrājamānaiśca tomarair //
- śaktibhiḥ parighair ghorair atimātraiśca kārmukair /  
gadāsimusalair vajirair grhīṭair bhīmadarśanair //

Mallets, spears, spikes, axes, swords, discuses, javelins, lances, clubs, maces, scimitars, thunderbolts and enormous bows. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa always use their bows and their magic arrows. The monkeys use anything at hand : rocks, trees and mountain peaks. Against the background of terrific *mêlées* in which armies are engaged in confused encounters, single combats stand out as the decisive climaxes of the war. There is a crescendo in the order of those single combats : minor heroes first take the field, then more prominent warriors enter the fray, until at last the two protagonists face each other in a deadly struggle. This pattern belongs

to all ancient epics : *The Song of Roland*, for example, offers us a neat miniature of the immense struggle of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Every single combat follows a common pattern, even if some of the features are omitted in the less important ones. We may take as an illustration the encounter between Rāma and Khara in 3.27-29.

1. Khara sees with alarm the defeat of his army and his two best officers Duṣaṇa and Triśiras. He decides to attack Rāma (27.1-5).
2. (Evil omens appear.) This feature is absent in the present encounter.
3. Seeing him advancing on his chariot, Rāma prepares his bow and both heroes release a shower of arrows which obscures the light of the sun (27.4-9).
4. All beings come to witness the fight (27.11),
5. From his chariot Khara seeing Rāma undaunted releases deadly arrows which break Rāma's bow and shatter his cuirass (27.12-16).
6. But Rāma shining like a smokeless fire takes up the bow of Viṣṇu given to him by Paraśurāma and, with his arrows, tears to pieces Khara's standard (27.17-21).
7. With four arrows Khara pierces the body of Rāma near the heart and Rāma stands with his body soaked in blood (27.22-23).
8. Infuriated Rāma, the best of archers (*dhanvinām śreṣṭhaḥ*), sends a shower of arrows which strike Khara in the head, in the arms and in the breast, destroy his chariot and his bow and cuts the head of of Khara's charioteer. With this we reach the first climax of the battle (27.24-28).
9. Khara jumps from his chariot and stands in front of Rāma mace in hand :

– prabhagnadhanvā viratho hatāśvo hatasārathiḥ /  
gadāpāṇir avaplutya tasthau bhūmau Kharas tadā // 27.29

10. Here there is an interruption in the fight : the heroes challenge each other. Rāma begins with a spirited sermon on the inevitable doom of evil-doers. The gist of his speech is held in this *śloka* :

– na ciraṃ pāpakarmāṇaḥ krūra lokajugupsitāḥ /  
viścaryaṃ prāpya tiṣṭhanti śiṣṇamūlā iva drumāḥ // 28.7

And he concludes thus :

– prahara tvam yathākāmam kuru yatnaṃ kulādhama /  
adya te pātayiṣyāmi śiras tālaphalaṃ yathā // 28.14

11. Khara retorts : Rāma boasts in vain, he has to pay for the destruction of thousands of *rākṣasas* (28.15-24). What can he do against Khara's mace ?

– paryāpto'ham gadāpāṇīr hantum prāṇān raṇe tava !  
trayāṇām api lokānām pāśahasta ivāntakaḥ // 27.22

12. Khara throws his mace which like a thunderbolt sets fire to trees and bushes (28.25-26).  
13. Rāma seeing the deadly weapon speeding towards him shatters it with arrows (29.27-28).  
14. Rāma taunts Khara, asking him where his vaunted power has gone. The earth will soon drink his foaming blood :

– adya te bhinnakaṇṭhasya phenabudbudabhūṣitaṃ /  
vidāritasya madbāṇair mahī pāśyati śoṇitaṃ // 29.6

Khara will pay for all the harm done to the holy hermits (29.1-12).

15. Khara replies that Rāma fails to realize that he is doomed (29.13-15).  
16. Khara looks around for a weapon, sees a big *sāla* tree, uproots it and throws it at Rāma (29.16-18).  
17. Rāma destroys it with his arrows and goes on showering darts at Khara whose blood flows abundantly (29.19-21).  
18. Maddened by the smell of blood Khara rushes towards Rāma (29.22).  
19. Rāma dodges him, seizes Indra's arrow and aims it at Khara's breast. The arrow strikes and Khara falls on the ground and dies (29.23-28).  
20. The hermits come to congratulate and thank Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā emerge from their hiding place. They go back to their hermitage and Sītā, proud of her husband, embraces him (29.29-35).

Such is the common pattern of single combats. Both heroes are powerful and, although the final issue is never in doubt, the fluctuations of the fight keep the audience in suspense. There are operative words and expressions which the bards are fond of using. Such are : (*susam*)*kruddha*, *abhidhāv*, *abhidru* and others. In the above quoted description we notice :

– Khara's mace : *tām āpatantīm jvalitām mṛtyupāśopamām gadām /*  
*antarikṣagatām Rāmaśccheda bahudhā śaraiḥ //*

– Khara's tree : *tam āpatantaṃ bāṇaughaiśchittvā Rāmaḥ pratāpavān /*

– Khara himself : *tam āpatantaṃ samprabdhām kṛtāstro rudhirāplutam //*



The same expression is also found in other combats :

- Tṇṇukū : *tām āpatantīm vegena vikrāntām aśanīm iva /*  
*śareṇorasi vivyādha sā papāta mamāra ca //* 1.25.14
- Mārīca and Subahu :  
*tām āpatanau sahasā dṛṣṭva rājīvalocanaḥ /* 1.59.12
- Suṣeṇa *tam āpatantam* gadayā Vidyunmālī niśācaraḥ /  
*vakṣasyabhijaghānāśu Suṣeṇam harisattamam //* 6.33.39
- a rock thrown by Hanumat :  
*āpatantīm śilām dṛṣṭvā gadām udyamya sambhramāt /*  
*rathād āplutya vegena vasudhāyām vyatiṣṭhata //* 6.42.27
- Hanumat :  
*tam āpatantam Dhūmrākṣo gadām udyamya vīryavān /* 6.42.32
- Kumbhakarṇa :  
*Niśācikṣepa śailāgraṃ Kumbhakarṇāya dhīmate /*  
*tam āpatantam samprakṣya muṣṭinābhijaghāna ca //* 6.55.15  
*tam āpatantam sampraśya Kumbhakarṇam mahābalaṃ /* 6.55.35
- Atikūya's arrow :  
*tam āpatantam niśitam śaram āśiviṣopamam /*  
*nrdhacandreṇa ciccheda Lakṣmanaḥ Paravīrahā //* 6.59.66
- Aṅgada :  
*tam āpatantam vivyādha Kumbhaḥ pañcabhir āyasaiḥ /* 6.63.14  
*āpatantam ca samprekṣya Kumbhe vānarayūthapam /* 6.63.18
- Mukarākṣa's spike :  
*tam āpatantam jvalitam Kharapūtrakarāceyutam /*  
*bhūṃis tu tribhir ākāśe śūlam ciccheda Rāghavaḥ //* 6.66.31
- Nuḡrīva's rock :  
*tam āpatantīm sahasā śilām dṛṣṭvā Mahodaraḥ /* 6.85.10

The verb *abhidhāy* (to attack) is used either in the active (*parasmaipada*) or in the middle (*ātmanepada*) voice according to the requirements of the metre. Thus :

- Tṇṇukū : *udyamya bāhū garjanti Rāmam evābhyadhāvata /* 1.25.14
- the hundred sons of Viśvāmitra :  
*abhyadhāvat susaṃkruddham Vasiṣṭham japatām varam /* 1.54.6

- Virādha : *abhyadhāvat susaṃkruddhaḥ* prajāḥ kālā ivāntakaḥ / 3.2.9
- Śūrpaṇakhā : *abhyadhāvat susaṃkruddhā* maholkā rohiṇīm iva / 3.17.17
- the *rākṣasas* : *abhyadhāvanta* Kākutsatham ... / 3.24.8  
                     *Rāmam evābhyadhāvanta* ... / 3.24.27
- Mārīca : *abhyadhāvaṃ susaṃkruddhaḥ* ... / 3.37.10
- Rāvaṇa : *abhyadhāvata* Vaidelīm Rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ / 3.50.6
- the monkey army :  
     *abhyadhāvata* tām senām rakṣasām kāmārūpiṇām / 6.33.4
- The monkeys :  
     ekāikaṃ rākṣasaṃ sankhye śataṃ vānarapuṅgavāḥ /  
     *abhyadhāvata* phalinam vṛkṣaṃ śakunayo yathā // 6.81.12
- Rāvaṇa : *abhyadhāvat susaṃkruddho* Māṇibhadraṃ Daśānanaḥ / 7.15.8
- Indrajit : *abhyadhāvata* devāmstān mumoca ca mahāsvanam // 7.28.20

The verb *abhidru* (to attack) appears many times. This is how it is used in the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa* and is made to fit in the metrical pattern :

a and c		b and d
– abhidudrāva	balinam	abhidudrāva Rāghavam
– „	vegena	abhidudrāva sāyakaiḥ
– „	tad rakṣaḥ	
– „	Sugrīvaḥ	
– tatas tam	abhidudrāva	Saumitrim abhidudruve
– harīn	samabhidudrāva	kruddāḥ samabhidudruvuh
– Rāmam	evābhidudrāva	
– Parigheṇābhidudrāva		

At the end of b or d we find a form of the imperfect in which grammar has been sacrificed to metre : *abhidravat* (v–v–) instead of *abhyadravat* (– –v–). Thus :

Nisācaram abhidravat  
 Hanūmantam „  
 Kumbhakarṇam abhidravan  
 Rāvaṇam samabhidravat  
 Aṅgadam „  
 yugapat samabhidravan

In the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa* alone *kruddha* (*saṃkruddha*, *susaṃkruddha*, *parama-*

*krudhā, bhīṣaṃkrudhā, abhisaṃkrudhā, parumasāṃkrudhā*) is used at least 122 times at the end of a or c. Examples :

- *atītaḥ Vayusutaḥ krudhā Rāvaṇaṃ samabhidravat* /  
Ajaḅhanorasi *krudhō* vajrakalpena muṣṭinā || 47.108
- *taṃ purastāt sthitaṃ dṛṣṭvā vānaraṃ parvatopamam* /  
Ajaḅhanorasi *krudhō* gadayā vajrakalpayā || 58.49
- *atītaḥ Kumbhaḥ samutpatya Sugrīvaṃ abhipadya ca* /  
Ajaḅhanorasi *krudhō* vajravegena muṣṭinā || 63.46
- *taṃ nīḥam iva saṃkrudhaṃ Rāmaṃ Daśarathātmajam* /  
narpaṇi suptam ivābuddhyā *prabodhayitum icchasi* || 52.14
- *loṇaṃ asambhramaṃ dṛṣṭvā vājinaṃ Rāvaṇas tadā* /  
bhūya eva *susaṃkrudhaḥ* śaravarṣaṃ *mumoca ha* || 95.16
- *nijaghnuḥ paramakrudhāḥ samadā iva kuñjarāḥ* /  
prāṇisubhir giriśṛṅgaiśca śilābhiśca *mahābalāḥ* || 54.8
- *an eṇa nirgato vīraḥ śibirād bhīmavikramaḥ* /  
vānaraṇaḥ *bhr̥śasaṃkrudhō* bhakṣayaṇaṃ paridhāvati || 49.29

Two equivalent expressions, one fitting the end of a and c, the other, the end of b and d, are of common use :

a and c	b and d
(ni)śitān bāṇān	(ni)śitān śarān
(ni)śitair bāṇaiḥ	(ni)śitaiḥ śaraiḥ

A few examples :

- *evam ukṭvā tu dharmajñau bhrātarau Rāmalakṣmaṇau* /  
nirbhīheda *śitair bāṇaiḥ* prajāharṣa *nanāda ca* || 35.13
- *an krodhavaśam āpanno hayānām apasarpaṇe* /  
*mumoca niśitān bāṇān* Rāghavāya *niśācaraḥ* || 96.9
- *an vavarṣa tato vṛkṣān śilāsca kapikuñjarāḥ* /  
tān praciccheda *saṃkrudhas* Trīśirā *niśitaiḥ śaraiḥ* || 58.8
- *taṃ bāṇaiśca ciccheda dhanur gajakaropamam* /  
Lakṣmaṇo rākṣasendrasya pañcabhir *niśitaiḥ śaraiḥ* || 88.16

The description of evil omens before a battle is a recurring theme in the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*. The most concise and compact account containing all the main features repeated and elaborated upon in other passages is to be found in 83.32-36 :

*tuto naṣṭaprabhaḥ sūryo diśaśca timirāvṛtāḥ* /  
*dvijaśca nedur ghorāśca sañcacāla ca medinī* ||

- vavarṣa rudhiraṃ devaścaskṣhaluṣca turaṅgamāḥ /  
dhvajāgre nyapatad gr̥dbro vineduścāśivaṃ śivāḥ //
- nayanam cāsphurad vāmaṃ savyo bāhur akampata /  
vivaṇṇavadanaścāsīt kincid abhraśyata svarah //
- antarikṣāt papātolkā nirghātasamanisvanā /  
vinedur aśivaṃ gr̥dhrā vāyasair anunāditāḥ //

The picture is clear : a lustreless sun, all-pervading darkness, the sky raining blood, the horses stumbling, animals uttering weird cries and a vulture perching on the banner, the throbbing of the left eye and the left arm, the face paling and the voice trembling, a comet falling from the sky with the rumbling of the hurricane, vultures and crows singing a song of doom. This picture is reproduced several times with a few variations.

As the fight goes on the bard stresses the impressive fury of the encounter. *The Song of Roland* uses the same device :

- “Fierce is the battle and wondrous grim the fight.” (110)
- “Fierce is the battle and marvellous and great.” (125)
- “Wondrous the battle and it grows faster yet.” (126)
- “Both French and Arabs are fighting with a will.” (253)

And the *Rāmāyaṇa* :

- tatrasīt sumahad yuddham tumulaṃ lomahaṣṇam /  
rakṣasāṃ vānarāṇāṃ ca vīraṇāṃ jayam icchatām // 33.16
- teṣāṃ tu tumulaṃ yuddham saṃjajñe harirakṣasāṃ // 42.2
- teṣāṃ yuddham mahāraudraṃ „ „ / 43.12
- teṣāṃ sutumulaṃ yuddham babhūva kapirakṣasāṃ /  
anyonyam āhvayāmānāṃ kruddhānāṃ jayam icchatām // 83.39
- tayoh sutumulaṃ yuddham sambabhūvādbhutopamam / 78.21
- tataḥ pravṛttaṃ sumahat tad yuddham lomahaṣṇam /  
niśācaraiḥ plavangānāṃ devānāṃ dānavair iva // 66.2
- prāvartata mähāraudraṃ yuddham vānararakṣasāṃ / 62.50
- tad babhuvādbhutaṃ yuddham dvairatham lomahaṣṇam /  
Rāmasya ca mahābāho Rāvaṇasya ca rakṣasaḥ // 90.13

In fine, the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa* is the epic *kāṇḍa par excellence*. In spite of the stereotyped pattern of the encounters and the repetitions of similar themes, it has the irresistible movement of an action narrative and bears the unmistakable stamp of traditional oral poetry.

# **THE MISSING ELEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM**

**RIKN T. SEGERS**

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The relations between text and reader are not at all clear nowadays : on the contrary, this topic is heavily disputed within the circles of contemporary reader-response critics. One of the embarrassing and at the same time interesting elements of this ongoing dispute is the absence of even the most basic agreement on the fundamental characteristics of the text-reader relationship. This may seem strange and surprising, since it seems reasonable to expect a discipline to describe its field of research so as to achieve a consensus within that discipline.

The reasons for this disagreement are partly to be found in the fact that large scale interest in reader-response criticism is only of a very recent date ; within the last five years alone we have been faced with an incredible number of publications, not only on the European continent, but also in Canada and the USA. Moreover, reading literature is a far too rich and many-faceted activity to be exhausted by a single theory (Suleiman and Crosman 1980, p. 31). But there is at least one other reason for that disagreement. Almost every scholar discussing the relations between text and reader feels it necessary to construct his own reader, and to develop his theory along the lines of his own personal reader construct. Now we face a legacy of all kinds of readers : intended and implied readers, real and ideal readers, informed readers, historical and contemporary readers, and last but not least, even superreaders. There seems to be almost as many reader types as there are reader-response critics.

Thus one of the most important tasks reader-response criticism has to accomplish is not the invention of another type of sophisticated reader, but the classification of the existing types of readers and reading theories. The aim of such a classification is not only to clarify the existing chaos of readers, but also and first of all to explore the possibility of developing a model for the relations between text and reader. Only when we have developed such a model, albeit partially, can future research into reader-response criticism be integrated fully into already existing research. Moreover such a model would have the advantage of being available for hermeneutic or sociological testing (see Segers 1980). Concerning the latter possibility, I would stress the necessity of a collaboration between reader-response criticism and the sociology of literature. The justification for

this collaboration may be found in the fact that a reading process never takes place in a vacuum, but always against the background of a social context (I will return to this later). But the sociology of literature can only contribute to the research of the literary communication process if reader-response criticism is able to define the several existing reader types and the status they have in the reading process.

So far I know of two initial classification schemes which try to categorize existing reader theories: Susan Suleiman's "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism" (in Suleiman and Crosman 1980) and an attempt made by Steven Mailloux (1982).

Suleiman distinguishes six varieties or approaches to reader-response criticism: *rhetorical* (with representatives a.o.: Stanley Fish, Gerard Genette and Paul de Man); *semiotic and structuralist* (with Roland Barthes, A.J. Greimas, Michael Riffaterre, Claude Bremond, Tzvetan Todorov and many others); the *phenomenological* approach (Roman Ingarden and Wolfgang Iser); then the *subjective and psychoanalytical* approach to reader response criticism (represented a.o. by respectively David Bleich and Norman Holland); the fifth approach is *sociological and historical* (with Ian Watt, Lucien Goldmann and Hans Robert Jauss); the last and sixth variety is what Suleiman calls the *hermeneutic* variety (in this context she mainly deals with contemporary Yale deconstruction with Geoffrey Hartman as its spokesman).

There are three significant critical points to be made against dividing reader-response criticism into these six varieties.

(1) Suleiman's categories force us to answer the question 'What is reader-response criticism?'. I consider reader-response criticism as a branch of literary criticism that concentrates on the following areas: the effect a text has on its readers; the reader's reaction towards a text; or the possible interaction between text and reader. If one accepts this answer, then Suleiman's division is highly problematic. Her six categories seem to simply lump together all current approaches to literature in general, rather than truly categorizing reader-response criticism. Considering rhetorical and structuralist approaches as part of reader-response criticism is, for example, not justified. Suleiman herself (on p. 22) admits that a rhetorical or structuralist critic "may place the question of reading ... into the background ..." Well, if the question of reading is placed in the background, then such an approach is not a part of reader-response criticism. The same reasoning seems applicable to the so-called

hermeneutic variety of Yale deconstruction. Suleiman defines this approach as "the self-conscious moment of all criticism, when criticism turns to reflect on its own intentions, assumptions, and positions" (p. 38). The focus here is on the text or on the institution of current criticism, but not on the interaction between text and reader.

(2) Even more damaging in our quest to understand the aims of reader-response criticism is the fact that this new approach to literature is categorized on the basis of pre-existing approaches. This is like pouring a California Chablis into a glass which already contains German Mosel. Several branches of reader-response criticism have proved capable of an independent existence. It is misleading to classify rhetorical, structuralist, or deconstructionist approaches under the heading of reader-response criticism. I obviously do not deny that they contain elements which are of interest to the text-reader relationship, but they simply do not thematize this relationship clearly enough to be enlisted under the banner of reader-response criticism.

(3) A third objection which must be levelled against Suleiman's categories is the omission of the so-called empirical or experimental approach. If there is one approach that thematizes the relationship between text and reader and stresses the necessity of research into reader's reactions, then it is this approach. Empirical reader-response criticism is associated with the work of the Canadian D.E. Berlyne (*experimental aesthetics*) and the German Norbert Groeben (*empirische Literaturwissenschaft*). Empirical reader-response criticism aims at describing the reactions of contemporary readers to fictional texts. It often uses methods and techniques of the social sciences (questionnaires and statistical procedures, etc.).

My overall judgment of Suleiman's introduction is not very favourable: the American reader receives an inadequate impression of what reader response criticism is all about and what it aims at. This is a pity, since the book itself is the result of a worthwhile initiative; introducing reader-response criticism at an international level to American scholars.

A second attempt to classify the various approaches within reader-response criticism was offered by Steven Mailloux in his recent book *Interpretive Conventions; the Reader in the Study of American Fiction* (1982). Mailloux develops a schema in which each critic is located on a continuum of reader-oriented approaches. The schema line runs from subjectivism via phenomenology to structuralism; that is, from David

Bleich's subjective criticism, via Norman Holland's transactive criticism and Wolfgang Iser's phenomenological criticism towards Stanley Fish's theory of interpretive strategies.

In this case the scholars Mailloux mentions are all representatives of a certain approach within reader-response criticism. But here too we see the same unfortunate classification of reader-oriented approaches on the basis of at least two pre-existing movements or philosophical schools: phenomenology and structuralism. If one takes a closer look, however, at the very nature of reader-oriented approaches, it appears that other criteria establish the primary dividing line between the several approaches discussed so far.

Two criteria are decisive, I believe, in the classification of any particular reader-oriented approach. These are clearly not its structuralist or its hermeneutic character, but, first of all, the way in which the communication process between text and reader is regarded and, secondly, the extent to which the reading process is related to the social context in which that process is embedded. I shall try to show that these two criteria do justice to the intentions of a reader-oriented approach. Moreover, if we evaluate existing reader approaches on the basis of these criteria, and if we develop future contributions to reading theories along these lines, then we may be able to open up reader-response criticism to the study of the social dimensions of the literary communication process. Therefore, my proposal would be a classification based on these two criteria (i.e. the way communication between text and reader is seen and the relation any particular reader approach has with the social context). Now I want to elucidate these criteria a bit more specifically.

To look at the way communication between text and reader is regarded, is primarily to ask the question: 'What role is attributed to the text and what role is attributed to the reader?' It is clear that this role may vary according to the freedom text and reader are given by a certain approach. We could locate such approaches on a scale from a clearly dominant textual role and a subordinated and unimportant reader's role to the reverse: a subordinated and unimportant textual role and a clearly dominant reader's role. I will demonstrate this principle briefly on the basis of two examples that are representatives of the extremes of the scale: Wolfgang Iser and Norman Holland.

If one concept gives an overview of Iser's theory (which in its main principles has remained relatively unchanged) it is dynamic tension. Iser



identifies two poles which represent the artistic (the text) and the aesthetic (the reader) dimensions. Through continual interaction between these two poles a sort of homeostasis or convergence is created enabling the actualization of a literary work. To cite Iser (1974, p. 50) :

The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader.

The tension between the freedom of the reader and the determination of the text is crucial to Iser's theory, especially in answer to critics who argue that the uniqueness of realization would lead to anarchy in interpretation or to the impossibility of interpretation at all.

So far the conclusion seems to be justified that text and reader are assigned a role of equal importance in the communication process. Therefore it seems as if Iser takes middleground position on the text-reader scale. But is that really the case ? In my opinion Iser's theory is much more text-oriented than reader-oriented. The gaps are 'given' by the text ; the reader is only allowed to fill them in, and even in this process the freedom of the reader is limited : the gaps are filled in according to the (given) structure of the text. The textual structure has an "inherently dynamic character" and reading causes the literary work to unfold that character (Iser 1974, p. 51). His view on the status of the text clearly shows a metaphysical undertone, for instance when he writes :

With all literary texts, then, we may say that the reading process is selective, and the potential text [sic ! RTS] is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations. (Iser 1974, p. 55)

Another test for the text-oriented perspective may be offered by the active role a text is able to play in the communication process, seen in expressions like "the experience *offered by the text*" (p. 59) and "the consequent unfolding of the text as a *living event*" (p. 64). One could ask whether a text-on-its-own is able to do anything. But even if one is willing to see such expressions in the light of a metaphorical rhetoric (which is not unusual in Iser's writings), they still suggest where Iser places the *real* power : in the text.

Concerning this point — what is given by a text and what is supplied by a reader — I agree with Stanley Fish's recent critique of Iser's work in *Diacritics*, when he says :

... there be no category of the 'given' if by given one means what is there before interpretation begins. (Fish 1981, p. 8).

In general, however, Fish's criticism of Iser is as unjustified as it is severe (even if one subtracts its rhetorical flavour). I am inclined to agree to a large extent with Wolfgang Iser's reply to Fish by taking a quotation from Oliver Goldsmith :

Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think ; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES. (Iser 1981, p. 82)

We find Norman Holland at the other end of the line : close to the reader pole. He sees the reading process as a transaction between reader and text. In this transaction the reader uses his so-called identity-theme to interpret the text. Differences in interpretation can be explained by differences in the personalities of the interpreters, as Holland (1975, pp. 123-24) puts it :

More precisely, *interpretation is a function of identity*, specifically, identity conceived as variations upon an identity theme....The overarching principle is : identity re-creates itself, or, to put it another way, style ... creates itself. That is, all of us, as we read use the literary work to 'symbolize and finally to replicate ourselves. We work out through the text our own characteristic patterns of desire and adaptation.

It goes without saying that for Holland the reader plays by far the dominant role in the reading process, which is almost exactly the opposite of Iser's point of view.

It is here not the place to consider who is right and who is wrong. One would certainly have a hard time proving that Iser is right and Holland wrong, or the other way around. Since both scholars take completely different points of departure, it makes little sense to compare the outcome. Moreover, there is more than one truth in complicated matters. There is, however, one point of similarity between Iser and Holland. They almost totally isolate the reading process from its social context, the society in which the reading process takes place. Both approaches and analyses of the reading process have a sort of sterile laboratory status, where an artificial reader behaves in a stimulus-response-like manner.

This brings us to the consideration of the second criterion, that of the social context, which is neglected by most reader-response critics. Only Stanley Fish and Steven Mailloux have recently moved in this direction.

Fish's thinking on the text-reader relationship has undergone a considerable change over the last ten years. In 1970 Fish's main question was : "What does this sentence do ?" He wanted to analyze the developing res-

ponses of the reader to the words in the text as they succeed one another on the page. Not every reader is of interest to the student of literature ; only 'informed readers' are. How text-oriented his 1970 approach is, can even be shown by his definition of this informed reader. He defines this reader mainly by textual categories (!). The informed reader is a competent speaker of the language out of which the text is built up ; he should have a semantic knowledge that a mature listener brings to his task of comprehension ; and – thirdly – he has literary competence.

In Fish's "Interpreting the *Variorum*" (1976) a major step was taken leading away from both text and reader. There Fish makes the point that the claims of neither the text nor the reader can be upheld, because neither has the independent status that would make its claim tenable. The interpretive strategies while reading are not those of the reader in a sense that would make him an independent agent. They proceed not from him, but from the so-called *interpretive community* of which he is a member. This concept of interpretive community has become very central to Fish's thinking, especially in his 1980 book *Is There a Text in This Class*, with the subtitle *The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Here he posits for instance :

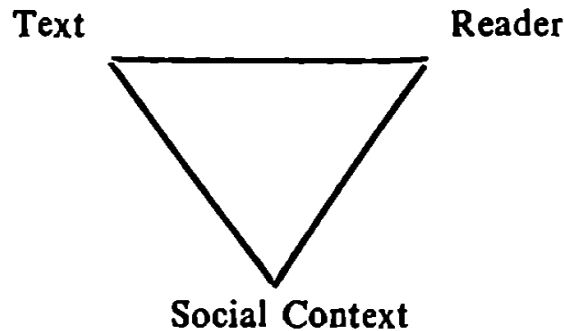
... it is interpretive communities, rather than either the text or the reader, that produce meanings and are responsible for the emergence of formal features. Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading but for writing texts, for constituting their properties. In other words these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around. (p. 14)

By means of this position Fish thinks the debate between the champions of the text and those of the reader is dissolved, because the competing entities are no longer perceived as independent. I am not so sure whether Fish's proposal solves all our problems ; moreover, Fish creates new problems. In his approach the individual reader seems to disappear in favour of the community, a concept which is insufficiently described. His treatment of this concept is on the whole somewhat naive, among other factors by a complete absence of political implications. As William Cain (1981, p. 86) has noted :

Missing from Fish's work is an explicit treatment of the political power at stake and active in the ordering of interpretive communities. A community does not simply emerge with a little shift and slippage, but struggles against ... an earlier one ; an interpretive community must clear space for itself, and define itself in opposition to others.

But my task here is not to criticize but to categorize. And as far as the latter task is concerned it is beyond doubt that Fish contributed the basis of an important missing element in reader-response criticism : the social context.

If we combine the first and the second criterion, we may construct the following triangle



Most reader-response critics so far have focussed mainly on the relations between text and reader, and forgotten the social context. That is why such academic questions could arise as : "If a text falls in the forest and there is no one to read, does it make a noise ?" (Juhász 1981, p. 465) or "What is given in a text, and what is left for a reader ?" When the social context is considered as an equally important element in the reading process (together with the text and the reader), then these questions disappear from the foreground of research, since they are easy to answer. When reading is seen as a socially controlled process, existing *and* restricted by means of certain conventions, then a text read by nobody does not do anything. As far as the other question is concerned, in a reading process an interplay exists between reader and text, controlled by the social context of reader and text, and these contexts need not necessarily be the same. What is given in a text are the signs encoded according to the rules and conventions of the textual (which is obviously the author's) social context. What is left for the reader is the most important part of the communication act : the decoding of the signs according to the reader's and/or the textual social context.

Let me conclude by saying that the communication process between text and reader always makes use of and develops itself against the background of a social context. If this context in a description of the text-reader-relationship is not taken into consideration, it will result in a considerable amount of 'static' in the final description. An analysis of the existing reader types in contemporary reader-response criticism will very

likely show that most of them are laboratory types, existing only within the framework of the text-reader-relation, without reference to the social context.

What do I mean by 'the study of the social context?' It implies—among other things—the study of reading conventions at a certain time in a certain society. These reading conventions should be studied in terms of the underlying factors which determine them, for instance, the literary institutions of a certain society, the political and economic situation, the status of fiction, etc. If reader-response criticism takes the social context as seriously as it does text and reader, it could not only free itself from an overly narrow perspective, but also do more justice to the praxis of reading literature in modern society. (For more background information and for the implications of my suggestion here outlined I refer to Segers 1984.)

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## PASCAL AND THE SCIENCE OF MAN

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In the *Advancement of Learning* (1605) Bacon divides man's knowledge into three branches : that which refers to nature, that which refers to God and that which refers to man. After examining the first two he states :

We come therefore to that knowledge whereunto the ancient oracle directeth us, which is the knowledge of ourselves : which deserveth the more accurate handling, by how much it toucheth us more nearly.<sup>1</sup>

There was nothing revolutionary in this statement. It is when he comes to consider the moral nature of man that the originality of Bacon's approach becomes evident. In discussing the duties of professions and vocations he observes that "the frauds, cautels, impostures and vices of every profession" must also be considered, not satirically but seriously and wisely. A knowledge of vice is essential for the study of virtue. Far from dismissing Machiavelli as the spokesman of Satan he observes :

We are much beholden to Machiavel and others that write what men do, and not what they ought to do. For it is not possible to join serpentine wisdom with columbine innocency.... Nay, an honest man can do no good upon those that are wicked to reclaim them, without the help of the knowledge of evil.<sup>2</sup>

The study of "what men do", an analysis of human motives, the springs of human action was the special concern of thinkers in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although many ingenious and profound thinkers applied themselves to this study, the findings of every thinker were found to be unsatisfactory by almost every other thinker. David Hume, for example, whose *Treatise of Human Nature* (1738) appeared more than a century after Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, hoped that :

I may contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge, by giving in some particulars a different turn to the speculations of philosophers, and pointing out to them more distinctively those subjects where alone they can expect assurance and conviction. Human nature is the only science of man ; and yet has been hitherto the most neglected.<sup>3</sup>

He was so suspicious of the metaphysicians of the 17th century that he rejoiced over the fact that there are "many honest gentlemen, who", are "always employed in their domestic affairs, or amusing themselves in common recreations." Instead of wishing to refine such pedestrian gentlemen into philosophers he wished :

We could communicate to our founders of systems, a share of this gross earthy

mixture, as an ingredient, which they commonly stand much in need of, and which would serve to temper those fiery particles, of which they are composed.<sup>4</sup>

While the founders of systems such as Descartes and Spinoza had been engaged in abstruse speculations quite remote from what Bacon and Hume called the science of human nature, the popular writers in the 17th and 18th centuries were investigating the benevolence and malevolence of human nature. Is virtue congenial to the nature of man? Is man actuated by egoism or altruism in his conduct? Two such popular writers were Shaftesbury, the author of the *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) and Mandeville, the author of the *Fable of the Bees; or Private Vices, Public Benefits* (1714). While professional philosophers were arguing about innate ideas (Locke), about essence and perception (Berkeley), these amateurs were speculating about matters of immediate concern to the ordinary reader. Mandeville begins his essay "A Search into the Nature of Society" with a refutation of Shaftesbury's benevolism:

The Generality of Moralists and Philosophers have hitherto agreed that there could be no Virtue without Self-denial, but a late Author, who is now much Read by Men of Sense is of a contrary Opinion, and imagines that Men without any trouble or violence upon themselves may be Naturally Virtuous. He seems to require and expect goodness in his Species, as we do a sweet taste in Grapes and China Oranges ...<sup>5</sup>

Mandeville on the contrary held that:

the generous Notions concerning the natural Goodness of Man are hurtful as they tend to mislead and are merely Chimerical: The truth of this latter I have Illustrated by the most obvious Examples in History. I have spoke of our Love of Company and Aversion to Solitude, examin'd thoroughly the various Motives of them, and made it appear that they all center in Self-Love.<sup>6</sup>

Pascal's milieu was different from the world of Shaftesbury and Mandeville. The forties and fifties of the 17th century in France i.e. the decades immediately before the publication of Pascal's *Provincial Letters* (1656) and the *Pensées* (1666) had been shaken by Descartes' *Discourse of Method, Meditations and Principles of Philosophy*. There had been a philosophical revolution in France which had repercussions on the intellectual climate of Europe. But Descartes like contemporary philosophers in the other countries of Europe such as Spinoza (1632-77) and Locke (1632-1704) was concerned largely with abstruse problems. His



refutation of the doubts raised about the existence, the omnipotence or the benevolence of God could not have convinced those who did not already believe in God for reasons strictly unmetaphysical. One resounding proof asserted by Descartes in the III *Meditation* is :

How would it be possible for me to know that I doubt, or that I desire, that is, that I am wanting in something and am not all perfect, if there were no idea in my mind of a being more perfect than myself by comparison with which I know the deficiencies of my own nature.<sup>7</sup>

The chain of reasoning is flawless. I think therefore I am, but I am imperfect or incomplete and therefore only partly real. But how do I know that I am imperfect except with reference to a being who is perfect? Now God is precisely such a being. About such reasoning Pascal shrewdly observed : "The metaphysical proofs of God are so remote from human reasoning, and so complicated, that they make little impression." (No. 381, p. 103)

Another irrefutable proof of God's existence is presented in the IV *Meditation* :

As long as I perceive something clearly and distinctly I must regard it as true.... It is certain that I have the idea of God, the idea of a sovereignly perfect Being, in my mind no less than the idea of some figure or number... I should at least regard the existence of God as being at least as certain as the truths I have accepted of mathematics. ... (p. 146)

Here is a classic example of an unwarranted assumption leading to a foregone conclusion.

Metaphysical errors fortunately do not mislead anybody except the metaphysicians. But when philosophers seek metaphysical proofs of ethical questions, such as the problem of evil or pain, then it is more reprehensible. The IV *Meditation* of Descartes offers a choice example of such reasoning. He sets out to justify God's ways to man as Leibniz was to attempt on a more extensive scale in the *Theodicy* (1710). Man, he claims, has no right to complain because man's defects or deficiencies are "nothing real". There are two tricks played on the reader here. First something as positive as pain is euphemistically called a "deficiency". The second trick is to dismiss this "deficiency" as nothing real. But to proceed with Descartes' argument. The defects of man according to him are not positive privations but mere negation or absence. That must be good comfort to one born blind or a cripple.

By way of a concession he adds :

Of course I see, nevertheless, that it would have been easy for God so to arrange matters that I should never err, despite my freedom and my limited power of knowing, either by giving my understanding a clear and distinct perception of everything on which I should have to deliberate, or by engraving so deeply on my memory the resolution never to form a judgment without this clear and distinct perception that I should be much more perfect than I am, if God had made me in such a way as to be faultless. What I cannot deny is that there is in a sense greater perfection in the universe, if some of its parts are subject to defect, while others are not, than if all are entirely alike. (p. 142)

Descartes is here falling back upon the idea of the great Chain of Being to explain man's imperfection. Man's fallibility forms part of a vast aesthetic design. The cosmic pattern would lose its perfect shape if man were more perfect than he is. Just as animals do not have man's reason, man does not have intuition which the angels have. Unfortunately man himself is not privileged to contemplate, far less to enjoy this aesthetic design.

Now there is no reason to believe that Descartes was any more privileged than any of us who are a part of the object contemplated. In any work of painting all the parts of the canvas cannot be equally bright. Some parts must be dark to serve as a contrast to the bright parts. But can one of the dark spots be expected to enjoy its darkness? In God's plenitude there is room for goats as well as men. The goat is there to serve the needs of man. But it would be presumptuous for any goat to inform its fellows that its flesh was essential to supply protein to the human diet or that its hide was useful for human footwear. Descartes is just one of the goats in the cosmic scheme who presumes to explain mysteries which are beyond the reach of human understanding. To be offered a fictitious explanation for imperfections, pains and evils felt actually, not fictitiously, is to be cheated.

Hence the need for a science of human nature. The word science itself is misleading. A number of philosophers in the 17th and the 18th centuries expressed the hope that ethics could be raised to the status of an exact science. Such hopes were ill-founded as David Hume showed :

There has been an opinion very industriously propagated by certain philosophers, that morality is susceptible of demonstration ; and though no one has ever been able to advance a single step in those demonstrations, yet it is taken for granted that this science may be brought to an equal certainty with geometry or algebra. (II. 172)<sup>8</sup>

The approach of the professional philosophers to problems of morality or the science of human nature was found to be unhelpful. What about the men of letters or the belletrists as we may call them? The contribution of the belletrists of 17th century France can be exemplified by the *Maxims* or Aphorisms (1665) of La Rochefoucauld. This is a form of writing sanctioned by the classical writers. In the epigrams or aphorisms of great writers a life-time of observation is summed up in a quotable form. La Rochefoucauld's maxims are most penetrating and reward careful study. I will offer a few examples which bear close analysis :

We cannot love anything except in terms of ourselves, and when we put our friends above ourselves we are only concerned with our own taste and pleasure. Yet it is only through such preference that friendship can be true and perfect.<sup>9</sup>

La Rochefoucauld has the kind of disenchanted out look that is characteristic of Bacon's *Essays* and yet what he says cannot be characterized as mere cynicism. He is not dismissing friendship as a branch of self-love. He holds that friendship is one of the few admirable things in human relationship where love of the friend is stronger than self-love. And yet the gratification of this altruistic pleasure is a form of egoism. It gives an egoistic pleasure and yet this egoistic pleasure is one of the few genuine relationships open to man's imperfect nature.

This is the kind of insight that the science of human nature should offer—the serpentine wisdom that Bacon talks of in the quotation with which this paper opens. Here is another example :

Nobody deserves to be praised for goodness unless he is strong enough to be bad, for any other goodness is usually merely inertia or lack of will power. (No. 237, p. 65)

This is the substance of a famous sonnet of Shakespeare which begins "They that have power to hurt and will do none." Such wisdom is to be found in Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* : e.g. "Those who restrain Desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained...."

This rather lengthy preface was necessary for a consideration of Pascal's views on human nature. He finds no place in most histories of philosophy. Attention is paid instead to men like Descartes in whom the perfection of form is combined with a sterility of thought. In the history of literature it is recognized that Pascal was one of the makers of modern prose in French, but not much attention is paid to the content of his writings because he did not write in any of the recognized literary forms

i.e. poetry, drama, fiction or even the essay. One of his great admirers, T.S. Eliot, found it difficult to classify him as a writer :

... Pascal was not a theologian. ...Nor was he indeed a systematic philosopher. He was a man with an immense genius for science, and at the same time a natural psychologist and moralist.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately Pascal did not live long enough to write the book he planned to write. The *Pensées* are notes which would have helped Pascal to write his work on religion. Eliot therefore is right in saying, "As he was a great literary artist, his book would have been also his own spiritual autobiography."

Since Pascal did not in fact write the projected book we are left with the impression that Pascal is one of "the might have beens" of literature. I hold the view that if the *Pensées* of Pascal cannot be considered under any of the recognized categories of literature, the fault lies in the categories, not in Pascal's work. I make this claim for the *Pensées* rather than for the *Provincial Letters*, because the latter is acknowledged by every critic as a masterpiece of controversial writing in the history of Christian theology. I hold that with all their perfection of form, excellence of irony and sarcasm, the *Letters* are of a mere topical interest whereas the *Pensées* go to what Graham Greene has in a memorable phrase called "the heart of the matter".

Historians of French literature have the same difficulty with Pascal's *Pensées* as the historians of English literature have with Dr Johnson's utterances recorded in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. There is no denying the profound influence that these writers have had on the popular imagination and yet they did not express themselves in any recognized literary form. Mr Ian Watt's defence of Dr Johnson invokes the authority of Pascal among others :

We obviously cannot disregard the whole tradition of wisdom literature from the Book of Ecclesiastes to Montaigne and Pascal, or all the other writings in which man has faced and recorded his actual thoughts and feelings.<sup>11</sup>

Such writings are characterized by Mr Watt as "the literature of experience". In the absence of any better name I suggest that we accept this category for Pascal's *Pensées*.

Pascal's vision of the human predicament, although presented in the language of 17th century Roman Catholic Church is so profound as to put both the professional philosopher and the professional literary writer in the shade. In the first place Pascal in the *Pensées* is concerned

out the human condition. He was surprised to find that although the study of man was man's true and proper study, he found even fewer men engaged in this study than in the study of geometry. (No. 156, p. 212)

What was Pascal's perception of the human condition? He states it honorably in *Pensées* No. 389 :

When I see the blindness and misery of man, when I gaze upon the whole silent world, and upon man without light, abandoned to himself, lost, as it were, in this corner of the universe, without knowing who has placed him there, for what purpose, or what will happen to him at death, and altogether incapable of knowledge, I become terrified, as would a man who had been carried off while asleep to some grim desert island and awoke without knowing where he was and without means of getting away. (p. 105)

The present writer has to admit that although he does not share Pascal's religious beliefs, this statement of the human predicament carries conviction with him. The professional philosophers seem remote in comparison with Pascal.

One reason why the professional philosopher fails to grasp the human predicament is hinted at in Pascal's fine distinction between the geometrical and subtle intelligence (No. 900). The basic principles of what Pascal calls the subtle intelligence are

so fine and so numerous that a very delicate and very clear sense is needed to perceive them, and to judge rightly and justly when they are perceived, without for the most part being able to demonstrate them in order as in geometry; because the principles are not known to us in the same way, and because it would be an endless matter to undertake it. We must see the matter at once, at one glance, and not by a process of reasoning, at least to a certain degree. And thus it is that few geometers are subtle.... (p. 265)

In place of geometers we could put scientists, philosophers and others engaged in abstract reasoning.

It may appear that the repudiation of reason or science does not become any more respectable or any less obscurantist by seeking shelter behind words like "subtle intelligence". 'Reason' is tangible and can therefore be assailed whereas 'intuition' is neither fish nor flesh and hence not vulnerable.

But Pascal's mode of reasoning as employed in the *Pensées* is far from obscurantist. In *Pensées* No. 462 there is a profound discussion which begins with an account of heresies, not in itself a very promising subject. It ends with examples of such heresies as Arianism. In between there are

some observations about the source of heretical thinking. These throw light on "subtle intelligence", that is to say, Pascal's own mode of reasoning :

There are then a great number of truths, both of faith and of morality, which seem contradictory, but which all hold good within a single and admirable system. The source of all heresies is the exclusion of some of these truths.

And the source of all the objections brought against us (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church) by heretics is ignorance of some of our truths.

And it generally happens that, unable to conceive the relation between two opposite truths, and believing that the acceptance of one involves exclusion of the other, they adhere to the one, exclude the other, and think of us as opposed to themselves. Well, exclusion is the cause of their heresy, and ignorance that we hold the other truth is the cause of their objections. (pp. 125-26)

In other words the acceptance of one truth does not necessarily exclude the acceptance of its opposite. Whereas in logic 'A' and 'non-A' cannot both be true at the same time in the same place, this is not necessarily true in religion. Jesus Christ is both human and divine, although being human and being divine are contradictory and mutually incompatible in ordinary circumstances. I am chary of calling this kind of reasoning dialectical because the term 'dialectical' has Hegelian overtones. Mr E.B.O. Borgerhoff prefers the term "antithetical" to describe Pascal's mode of reasoning.<sup>1 3</sup>

Pascal's examples are all taken from the history of heresies as the context demands, but such subtle intelligence is not peculiar to theology. Here is an example from poetry :

Methinks I lied all winter, when I swore,  
My love was infinite, if spring make it more.  
(*"Loves Growth"*)

Donne is here presenting a paradox of experience in love. The lover swears that his love is infinite and yet when spring comes, he feels a certain expansiveness of the soul of which his love partakes. Now what infinite cannot by definition increase. And yet the poet says that he felt it increase. Who is to say that the poet was mistaken about his own feeling ?

Pascal's mode of reasoning found a peculiar form for expressing this awareness of the ambivalence of experience. He found it in paradox. I shall give a few characteristic examples :

The greatness and the misery of man are so evident that the true religion must necessarily teach us that there is in man both some great source of grandeur, and also a great source of misery. (No. 309, p. 83)

This is taken by Pascal to be evidence of the dual nature of man. He is

at present in a fallen state but he was once in a state of glory, i.e. before Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit.

A whole-hearted acceptance of Pascal is possible only for a professing Christian but there is at the core of Pascal a sentiment which will find an echo in many breasts. His success is partly owing to the formulation of his ideas in terms of paradoxes or "contrariedades" as he called them :

Man's supreme baseness is the pursuit of glory, but it is also the most cogent evidence of his excellence ; for no matter what possessions he may have on earth, no matter what degree of health and essential comfort, he is not satisfied unless he is esteemed by men. ...

Those who most despise men, and rank them with brute beasts, still wish to be admired and trusted by men, thus contradicting themselves by their own feelings ; their natural desire, which is stronger than all else, convinces them of man's greatness more forcibly than reason convinces them of his baseness. (No. 91, p.30)

Here is truth not discursive or abstract but palpable or felt on the pulse as Keats would have said.

Another example of a paradox which is aphoristic like La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims*, is : "The greatness of man is great in that he recognizes himself as miserable." (No. 218, p. 58) In other words Man's glory consists in knowing that he is miserable. Consciousness is a gift denied to the tree, so also is the curse of knowing that it is miserable.

It should be noted that Pascal explains man's place in creation with the help of the doctrine of the Great Chain of Being. Man's place is below that of the angels and above that of the brutes. He must not presume either to equal the angels or descend to the level of the beasts. This doctrine was current in the 17th and 18th centuries. Pope and Leibniz made use of it. But Pascal's acceptance of this doctrine did not lead him to offer fictitious consolation for the imperfections experienced by man. It has already been shown earlier on in this paper how Descartes offered such consolations.

Pascal's paradoxical manner arises from his perception of the dual nature of man. Pascal illustrates it with examples from every aspect of experience :

We long for truth, but find within us only uncertainty. We seek happiness, and only find misery and death. We inevitably long for truth and happiness, but are incapable of certitude or happiness. (No. 125, p. 40)

We may not share Pascal's conclusion that this self-contradictory state

of mind is partly a punishment for original sin and partly a reminder of it, but we cannot help feeling the force of the statement.

The true nature of man has not, according to Pascal, been understood by the other religions. They make the mistake of simplifying and hence of falsifying both nature and human nature :

For, not seeing the whole truth, they could not attain the perfect virtue. Some considering nature as incorruptible, and others as incurable, they could not escape either pride or sloth (which are twin sources of all the vices), since (they cannot but) either abandon themselves thereto through cowardice, or escape therefrom through pride. (No. 402, p. 113)

We must recognize nature and man as both corrupt and curable. Only then can we escape the opposite extremes of pride and despair, both of which are sinful according to Christianity. The superiority of Christianity lies in this recognition. Pascal states :

In order that a religion be true, it must understand our nature. It must know the greatness and littleness of that nature, and the reason for both. What religion other than the Christian has understood this ? (No. 409, p. 114)

The same sentiment is presented in another context by Pascal :

Knowledge of God without knowledge of man's wretchedness begets pride. Knowledge of man's wretchedness without knowledge of God begets despair. Knowledge of Jesus Christ constitutes the middle way, because in Him we find both God and our wretchedness. (No. 388, p. 103)

About "Christian Morality" he observes :

Christianity is strange. It bids man acknowledge that he is vile, even abominable, yet bids him desire to be like God. Without such a counterpoise, this dignity would render him terribly abject. (No. 667, p. 186)

The ambivalence of Pascal's vision can be illustrated from his observations on the imagination, which use of the term incidentally should not be confused with 'imagination' in the literary sense. Now the hold that fictions, myths and falsehoods have on the human mind has been noted by a number of thinkers. Instead of ascribing man's love of untruth to perversity or selfishness the science of man investigates the matter at a psychological level. Bacon, for example, in the essay "Of Truth" offers the following explanation :

Doth any man doubt that if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it



would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves?

Pascal investigates the nature of imagination even more acutely. Imagination according to Pascal is the enemy of reason. It misleads not only fools but the wisest man. How does it lead men astray? By mixing up truth and falsehood:

It is the dominant part of man, that mistress of error and falsehood, the more of an impostor in that she is not always so... she gives no sign of her nature, impressing the same character upon the true and the false.

But Pascal is not concerned with the ethical nature of imagination alone. "The science of man", as Bacon said, consists also in the study of motives. Why do men allow themselves to be deceived by imagination? Pascal's explanation is that

she fills those in whom she resides with a far more complete satisfaction than does reason. Those who have a lively imagination are a great deal more pleased with themselves than the prudent can reasonably be.

The neuteness of Pascal is shown in the epigrammatic climax:

Imagination cannot make fools wise, but she makes them happy, to the great regret of reason, who can only make her friends miserable; imagination covers men with glory, reason with shame.

But even this is not the last word on the subject because the reader may conclude that Pascal is being satirical like Swift who regards the sway of fancy as a step towards madness (See *A Tale of a Tub*, IX). Pascal wants us to see not only that imagination is deceitful and all pervasive. It may blind the imaginative person with false consolations but it also "creates beauty, justice and happiness—which is all that matters in this world." (No. 81, pp. 25-27) On earth at any rate this is the highest satisfaction available to man. It has pleased God to make man just such a creature who is led or misled by mere appearance. This theme has been presented in a humorous manner by the poet Yeats in a poem called "For Anne Gregory".

Beauty is not a quality inherent in the object. Happiness very often depends on extraneous reasons such as money, clothes or lodging. About justice it may not be easy to see why Pascal considers it to be a matter of appearance. But from the context it is clear that Pascal does not use the term 'justice' in the abstract sense. That is, he is not concerned with the subject matter of Plato's *Republic*. Pascal refers to the administration of justice which requires the aid of the imagination:

Our magistrates clearly understand this mystery. Their red robes, their ermine in which they wrap themselves like furry cats, the courts in which they administer justice, the fleur de lis – all this august paraphernalia was most necessary. (No. 81, pp. 26-27)

As a matter of fact the quest for imaginary or deceptive satisfactions is a necessary accompaniment of the human condition. It is a compensation for our frustration with the actual :

We are not satisfied with our life as it really is ; we desire to have an imaginary life in the minds of others, and for that purpose we endeavour to shine. (No. 169, p. 47)

There is a paradox in human nature. We are doomed always to seek happiness and never to find it :

All men seek to be happy ; that is without exception. However different the means which they employ to that end, they all strive towards it. (No. 300, pp. 80-81)

He adds :

An effort so prolonged, so continuous and so uniform ought certainly to convince us of our inability to reach the good by our unaided efforts ; but example teaches us little. No resemblance is ever so perfect that there is not some slight difference ; and so we expect that our hope will not be disappointed on this occasion as before. Thus, while the present never satisfies us, experience deceives us, and leads us from one misfortune to another, and so to death, an everlasting fulfilment. (p. 81)

The pathos of the human condition lies in that “We have an idea of happiness, to which we cannot attain. We perceive an image of truth, but possess only a lie.” (No. 246, p. 65)<sup>14</sup>

Pascal is equally profound on the topic of ‘distraction’ :

Having there set myself sometimes to consider the various activities of mankind, the pains and perils to which they expose themselves at court or in war. whence arise so many quarrels, passions, rash even wicked undertakings etc. I have often said that all men’s unhappiness is due to the single fact that they cannot stay quietly in a room. (No. 269, p. 70)

But pascal is not content to condemn the quest of what he calls distraction and what we might call ‘excitement’ or an escape from boredom. A physician does not rest content with the detection of symptoms. Pascal’s diagnosis is unambiguous :

there is one very strong reason, namely, the natural unhappiness of our weak and mortal condition, so miserable that, when we think of it attentively, nothing can comfort us. (pp. 70-71)

In order to seek an escape from our unbearable condition we seek such

distractions as hunting, cards and war making. Even the aspirations for high office is just such a distraction. Those who seek high office are as much deceived as those who hunt the hare :

They imagine that if they obtained this office they would then gladly settle down. But they are ignorant of the insatiable nature of their craving ... they think they are honestly seeking repose, whereas in fact they are looking for excitement. (p.72)

This paradox is explained once again with reference to the two-sided nature of man. Our present condition is fallen and hence we are doomed to restlessness but we are descended from an unfallen state which teaches us that "real happiness consists only in repose, not in turmoil." (p.72)<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion I might say that Pascal's perceptions are shared by many great writers of the 17th and 18th centuries in Western Europe. Theologians such as Bishop Butler showed a similar grasp of the human condition in *The Analogy of Religion* (1736). Dr Johnson's vision is as penetrating and undeceived as that of Pascal. But these writers, like Pascal, find no place in the history of philosophy.

#### NOTES

- 1 ed. G.W. Kitchin (Everyman 1950), p. 105.
- 2 *Advancement*, p. 165.
- 3 *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I, iv, 7, ed. A.D. Lindsay (Everyman, 1951), I, iv, 7.
- 4 *Loc. cit.*
- 5 *The Fable of the Bees*, ed. D. Hard (Penguin, 1970), p. 329.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 346.
- 7 *Discourse on Method*, trans. A. Wollaston (Penguin, 1960), p. 127. Subsequent quotations from Descartes are followed by page numbers in the body of the text.
- 8 *A Treatise*, III, i, 2.
- 9 *Maxims*, trans. L.W. Tancock (Penguin, 1959), p. 45.
- 10 *Selected Essays* (Faber, 1951), p. 407.
- 11 "Dr Johnson and the Literature of Experience", *Johnsonian Studies*, ed. M. Walsby (Cairo, 1962), p. 21.
- 12 *Pensées*, ed. L. Lafuma, trans. J. Warrington (Everyman, 1960). All quotations from Pascal are followed by page numbers of this edition.
- 13 "The Reality of Pascal : The *Pensées* as Rhetoric", *Sewanee Review*, LXV (1957), 13-14.
- 14 Pascal uses psychological evidence to prove the point that man's paradox can be explained only with reference to the fall. Man's present condition is fallen but he retains some memory of his unfallen condition.
- 15 For this part of the discussion I am indebted to Chester F. Chapin, "Johnson and Pascal", *English Writers of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. J.H. Middendorf (New York, 1971), pp. 3-16.

# READING AGAINST THE IMPERIAL GRAIN INTERTEXTUALITY, NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND LIBERAL HUMANISM IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S *UNTOUCHABLE*

SUSIE THARU

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The question of untouchability, like the question of women, has been with us now for well over a hundred years. For the reader whose eyebrows shot up at the brief span mentioned, let me explain. I use the word 'question' here as it is generally used, to indicate (1) a problem ; (2) a debate or a controversy ; (3) a contradiction or disruption, that the social body as a whole, or a specific institution within it, feels impelled to resolve. I speak therefore, not of untouchability itself, but of the problem of untouchability as it was posed in its colonial (which is also its contemporary) incarnation. The focus is not on the actual phenomenon, but on the signficatory apparatus that sets up, or to use Macherey's<sup>1</sup> metaphor, "stages" the problem for our engagement, consideration and resolution ; in other words, on the discourse that defines (and produces) it.

Rarely within the scope of scholarship in/on India have such discourses been put under scrutiny. Ranajit Guha's "The Prose of Counter Insurgency" is one of the few exceptions. That is, of course, if we set aside Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam*<sup>2</sup> as touching India only by extension. Guha proceeds from the premise now commonly accepted in narratology that the text is not, as historic third person narrative would have us believe, a transparent vehicle of meanings pre-existing in the world, but a site where meaning is produced. "It is precisely by refusing to prove what appears as obvious," he writes, "that historians of peasant insurgency remain trapped—in the obvious. Criticism must therefore start, not by naming a bias but by examining the components of the discourse, vehicle of all ideology, for the manner in which these might have combined to describe any particular figure of the past."<sup>3</sup>

Guha's subject is the historical writing that deals with the Santal rebellions of the 19th century. Each of these histories, Guha demonstrates, constitutes a prose of *counter* insurgency for they blunt the cutting edge of the revolt as they absorb it into narratives with other, more global designs. My concern in this paper is a related one. What happens, I ask myself, if we examine the question of untouchability thus, as discourse ? What happens if for the moment we lay aside the overt or explicit claims of a text and search instead for the micro-mechanisms and the components that covertly establish the structure of the machine and its product ?

A comprehensive analysis might require that we study other writings on the subject: Phule, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Ambedkar, perhaps even Ananthamurthy. I have, however, chosen Anand's path-breaking novel because I believe that the problematic as it emerges there is exemplary. And that brings me to the substance of Guha's argument which also relates closely to our investigation.

Guha distinguishes between three kinds of "counter-insurgent" writing: the primary discourse of immediate record or despatch, invariably "official"; the distanced, secondary narrative of British historiography, and the tertiary discourse of Indian nationalism that absorbs the Santals into a long History-of-the-Freedom Struggle centred on the Indian bourgeoisie. In none of these narratives, he shows, are the Santals the conscious agents/subjects of an action they embark on. Rather, they are characters in plots outside the scope of their understanding. Empire, Nation, People are the macro-visions within which the micro-event of revolt is absorbed and shaped. Within each discourse the revolt is mediated through the devices of metaphor, setting, narrative structuring, the 'objectivity' achieved through the distance of retrospective narration and of course the closure that draws the event back into the flow of mainstream time and the direction of mainstream commitment. Each account, in line with Guha's phraseology, hitches the *hool*<sup>4</sup> to a different destiny.

British historiography, for example, whether it expressed itself in the "anguinary idiom" that saw the insurgent simply as an object to be exterminated, or in the mixture of firmness and understanding that characterized the liberal perspective on the revolt (menace to the stability of the Raj but also critique of its poor administration) absorbed the event into a narrative that might be entitled "England's work in India". How was it that even the more liberal type of secondary discourse could not extricate itself from the programme of Empire and the code of counter-insurgency?<sup>5</sup> Guha asks, but does not pause to answer.

Anand's writing poses a very similar problem. At issue here is not his nationalist commitment (it is interesting that even Leonard Woolf, that great liberal friend of India found Anand's nationalist enthusiasms—as he did Virginia's feminism—excessive, and "extreme Congress"<sup>6</sup>) but what happens when nationalism made its alliances with liberal imperialism. What is it, we need to ask, in this liberal nationalism—which we have tended to characterize as modern, or progressive—that keeps the untouchable working patiently while an enlightened administration attends to the

resolution of his problem : the water-closet. How does a writer of Anand's stature become accomplice to a programme in which the oppressed, waiting for civilization to be brought to them, continue to be a source of cheap, but proud labour ?

However, lest this analysis be misconstrued by a critical orthodoxy myopically focussed on aesthetic evaluation, two observations by way of a preamble. In many ways Anand stands out from the mainstream of Indian fiction written in English. At a time when nationalist sentiment was heavily revivalist in its inflection, when many writers were pre-occupied with searching on indigenous tradition for myths that would serve the psychic needs of a rising nationalism, and when an unqualified glorification of this tradition was often in order, Anand wrote about untouchables, workers and peasants in a way that apparently breaks with these orthodoxies-in-the-formation. We find in Anand none of the more familiar urgencies of a culture emerging from colonialism : no escape into the formal composure of myth, or even into the uncontested glory of a past produced, in lieu, as it were, of an unrepresentably, and therefore for us as colonized, unbearably, shoddy and unaesthetic present. There is no significant attempt in Anand to reassert the *Indian* as against the *Western* and little exoticism in the usual sense of the word. In contrast to his contemporaries (Raja Rao and Aurobindo Ghosh, for example) present time and present place is not merely the occasion, but the subject of Anand's writing.

Anand breaks with the mainstream in another important way. Untouchability as it was discussed over the turn of the century was invariably a problem for the *upper* castes, who, to use Guha's terminology, were the real subjects of the discourse. This is clearly so in both Vivekananda and Gandhi, for example. Beset, on the one hand, by the moral questions Imperialism confronted them with as part of the argument about the necessity for continued, if not permanent, presence in India, and on the other by the very real threat of divisions the Imperialists might succeed in engineering within Indian society itself, an emerging nationalism found it imperative to address itself to the 'moral' question of untouchability. It is obvious that the 'answer' that was to be 'found', had to provide a closure for that particular disruption. Within these models, the untouchable, like the Santal, is rarely the subject of the discourses that pose his/her problem. Not so in Anand. The hero of his novel is an untouchable, and there is an attempt in the narrative to explore his point of view. But,

As we shall see, the shift is not as radical as it would appear, because Anand's vision is blurred and distorted by the hidden optic that determines it. In the final analysis, despite Anand's sympathy for the down-trodden, the future belongs more to the career of the Raj than to Dalit freedom.

How does this happen? The plot in *Untouchable* (as in many of Anand's novels) is centred on the character of the oppressed or the exploited. Anand constructs Bakha, as Engels and Lukács would have him do, both as a credible individual and as 'typical' of the historical phenomenon the novel addresses itself to. But within the colonial situation this task is shot through with several contradictions. The initial burden is to establish Bakha not just as a plausible character, but as a 'human' being who has the right, like any other, to a 'human' life. But the very terms Anand has at hand to construct this 'human' being are not just those of a liberalism that cedes the untouchable human status, but of a liberalism transmuted by the racist biases of Imperialist ideology.

What emerges as we shall see when we attend critically to Bakha's 'point of view', is a world constructed out of elements drawn from this entirely different scheme of things. Smuggled in and legitimated under the guise of an individual subjectivity which is imaged as free and autonomous source of the meanings that issue 'instinctively' from him, is an ideological composition specifically geared to establishing and maintaining Imperial power. Unwittingly, the narrative slips (as so many other narratives even today do) into a colonialist diagnosis of the disease and its prescription for recovery and 'progress'. Given this, it is not surprising that Bakha has to seek the resolution to his problem, not from his socio-political situation with others of his kind, but in isolation, alone with the hills and forests, calmly reflecting on different 'solutions' offered to him.

Much has been made, for instance, of Anand's ability to identify with his characters and recreate for the reader the sensory quality of the characters' worlds. When Bakha enters a street, critics point out, we not only see as he does, in terms of how much work there is for him, but smell it as a hungry man would. Similarly, they argue, when Munoo first goes to town, we see the crowds and the shops with a child's excitement, from his particular revealing angle. There is unquestionably a sense in which this is so. Anand does provide us with elaborately delineated versions of these worlds; sensory detail meticulously recorded; sight, sound, smell and touch recreated. But the overall effect remains empiric-

al, enumerative, more technically perfect than experientially convincing for rarely does sound or sight cohere into a convincing experiential whole. Take Munoo's first journey through the town, for instance. He lag behind, "absorbed by ... the most spicy smells ... tiers of sweets, dripping syrup ... rubber balloons and little pink dolls ... A stall keeper ... emptying little conic tins onto leaf cups ... the weird tin wail of a song which issues from a box on which a black disc revolved."<sup>8</sup> The technique is evident: a kind defamiliarization of the object (no kulfis or gramophones here) that would apparently characterize the village child's first encounter with a city bazaar. But, one soon realizes, nothing specific to Munoo's life impinges on the description. The experience is that of some idealized generic 'child'. My concern, however, is with the not so immediately visible other rhetoric embedded in this one: the excitement and revulsion of the European in an Indian bazaar. *Spicy* smells, tiered sweets *dripping* syrup, *leaf* cups, *weird* tin wails—and the ultimate in Indian imitative tastelessness, 'little pink dolls', compose a specific idea of the bazaar.

It is not difficult to show that this is nearly always the horizon within which Anand's narrative voice achieves coherence. As recent work on classic realism<sup>9</sup> shows, though the moment of closure is the point at which everything becomes intelligible to the reader, a kind of on-going intelligibility is maintained through a hierarchy of discourses. Within this hierarchy, a privileged discourse 'places' as subordinate all other discourses which are literally or figuratively between inverted commas. In other words fragmentary discourses that appear on the page are ordered and evaluated by a dominant historic narration, which is the source of coherence for the text as a whole. Often, as in the text under consideration, this privileged discourse works subtly, covertly, presenting its artifice, as it does here, as if it were nature itself. The reader (or at least the conventional reader) is gently invited to perceive, to draw inferences, to recover the norm implicit in ironic presentation, in brief, to participate as 'free' and autonomous subject in the production of the coherent world that emerges through the plot. One need hardly stress that this coherence is also the principal vehicle of the ideological apparatus carried by the text.

There are further dimensions to this hidden orientation. Dimensions I would like to explore through a longer extract, this time from the first pages of *Untouchable*.

And he slowly slipped into a song. The steady heave of his body from one latrine to another made the whispered refrain a fairly audible note. And he went



forward, with eager step, from job to job, a marvel of movement, dancing through his work. Only, the sway of his body was so violent that once the folds of his turban came undone, and the buttons of his overcoat slipped from their worn-out holes. But this did not hinder his work. He clumsily gathered together his loose garments and proceeded with his business.

Men came one after another, towards the latrines. Most of them were Hindus, naked, except for the loin-cloth, brass jugs in hand with the sacred thread twisted round their left ears. Occasionally came a Mohammadan,<sup>9</sup> who wore a long, white cotton tunic and baggy trousers, holding a big copper kettle in his hand.

Bakha broke the tempo of his measured activity to wipe the sweat off his brow with his sleeve. Its woollen texture felt nice and sharp against his skin, but left an irritating warmth behind. It was a pleasant irritation, however, and he went ahead with renewed vigour that discomfort sometimes gives to the body. ... For, although he didn't know it, to him work was a sort of intoxication which gave him a glowing health and plenty of easy sleep. So he worked on continuously, incessantly, without stopping for breath, even though the violent exertion of his limbs was making him gasp.... He could see the half-naked brown bodies of the Hindus hurrying to the latrines. Some of those who had already visited the latrines could be seen scrubbing their little brass jugs with clay on the side of the brook. Others were bathing to the tune of 'Ram re Ram'; crouching by the water, rubbing their hands with little twigs bitten into the shape of brushes; rinsing their mouths, gurgling and spitting noisily into the stream; douching their nose and blowing them furiously, ostentatiously.<sup>10</sup>

Once again the detail in this description of Bakha at work remain circumstantial, mere incident, unabsorbed into a lived sense of the experience. His turban and buttons come undone, but we do not share his inconvenience or discomfort. The carefully focussed tactile observation: the irritation of rough wool against skin does not seem to affect Bakha in any way. In fact the effect is of a narrator so close up to the object, the perceptual distance is not objective, as Anand might have liked to imagine, but mechanical. We perceive the other in parts: as sight, or touch, or movement, from the exterior. As we set this against the naturalization of Bakha's labour evidenced in "marvel of movement", "dancing through his work" or again "work was an intoxication which gave him glowing health and plenty of sleep", the ideological complex is more clearly delineated.

One only grasps the coherency of the discourse as a *whole*, however, as one studies the description of the "Hindus, naked except for the loin-cloth, brass jugs in hand ...", or "a Mohammadan, who wore a long white cotton tunic and baggy trousers ...". The same note is repeated towards the end of the extract which gives us the early morning scene in some detail. *Whose eye, whose consciousness is this?* Anand tells us it is Bakha's but

it is really the eye of a stranger to the place, or more accurately, the eye of one, who aware of the stranger s/he is showing around, chooses to focus on and explain that which the stranger finds alien or unfamiliar. One is aware of the stranger's curiosity, and even disapproval : the sacred thread, the brass jug, the twigs bitten into the shape of brushes, the noisy *splitting*, the *ostentatious* nose doucheing. One might compare this with the description of the bazaar Bakha walks through later in the story. Once again, a great deal of detail : deliberate attention to colour, then smell, but if we ask, for whom is this description meant, whose nose, whose eye, searches this landscape, the answer is disturbing.

The implications, I believe emerge more clearly, more subtly, in the first paragraphs of the novel which also provide the context, both fictional and discursive, in which the problem is set.

The outcastes' colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcastes from Hindu society. A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal-clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes. The absence of a drainage system had, through the rains of various seasons, made of the quarter a marsh which gave out the most offensive stink. And altogether the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lay within it, made it an 'uncongenial' place to live in.

The key lies here too, in characterizing the narrative voice. It is altogether too distant, too clinical in its recording of item and detail, indeed too squeamish, to be that of someone who has lived in one part of the village, and that too the poor quarter, for all his life. Yet we are explicitly told later that this is "altogether" what "Bakha thought". Critics have commented on this slipping effect before and have even attributed the 'failure' of his novels to this confusion. But having arrived at an evaluative formula (the legitimate end of the New Critical venture) they stop short of probing its crucially important significance.

Echoing the mode of sociological treatises, the first sentence situates the outcaste's colony in relation, not only to the other parts of the village, but also to the rest of the world. The 'objective' social scientific perspective, still meticulous in the sensory realism that apparently establishes its

factility, is reinforced by the technical diction: "mud walled", "clustered in two rows", "boundaried", "carcasses", "drainage system", "probation" and so on. The only hint in the first sentence, of a subjective vision, is held in the emotive overtones of the metaphor, "shadow", a use one almost discounts as accidental, for its resonances are hardly picked up or developed. The diction is held consistent in the subsequent list of functionaries housed in the area. These, we are told, are the "outcasts from Hindu society". This may at first glance seem an innocent piece of information, but specified here is the implied reader of this discourse. A discourse, we realize, that is not really that of the sociologist, who on the whole studies his or her own society in its complex, advanced form, but that of the *anthropologist* studying an alien even primitive society. As the novel develops we will find this is a society whose irrational customs have to be pointed out and explained, and where the behaviour of people is never immediately understood. We are, for instance, told that the "Hindu Sepoy" gives Bakha a pair of boots, not, as one might (erroneously) expect if one were white or Christian, out of charity or kindness, but out of self interest; for the good of his own soul. Chota oils "his hair *profusely*". The 'neutral' scientific observer, whose tone and attitude are mimed in the narrative voice, we find, owes allegiance not only to an academic discipline but to the knowledge or experience structure of the reader s/he is addressing. Here the reader is foreign, more specifically, British, or, if Indian, an Indian who is coerced into seeing the society s/he lives in, as strange in the same way as white society does. Further this perspective is casually projected through the historic third person narrative as 'objective' or 'scientific', in other words, a norm that needs no questioning. Consider also the description of the place: "dirt ... filth ..., odour ... dung ... ugliness ... squalor ... misery", all summed up in "uncongenial"? Against all this is the crystal clear water of the stream that suggests a past purity, that was 'natural' in its quality. Anand himself, I would suggest, is vaguely aware that the viewpoint here is necessarily that of someone who has grown away from the village and out of his old consciousness. Bakha, he explains, finds it "uncongenial" only because the "tommies had treated him as a human being..." The dynamic of the text here is complex, but clear.

Our reading is more systematically reinforced in the episode describing Bakha's visit to the temple. In the first section, Anand attempts to create a sense of what breaking the taboo and entering the temple might have meant to an untouchable. The point of view here, if you like, would

seem to be determinedly that of the untouchable Bakha. Yet note how 'objectively' the description is done. We are given the event in terms of physiological detail, almost as though Bakha was a large mechanical doll: "Captured five steps of the fifteen"... "heart drumming fiercely in his chest, which bent forward like that of an atheletic runner on the starting line, his head thrown back". Or even "force of an impulse", "almost thrown out of equilibrium", "accidental knock", "recovering his balance". Bakha is objectified, and the description drained of all subjective dimension. (A dimension Anand maintains, though still somewhat questionably, in the lines, "the temple stood challengingly before him" and in "a glimpse, just a glimpse of the sanctuary which had, so far, been a secret hidden mystery to him.")

The description of a ceremony in the sanctum of the temple shifts the nature of the discourse slightly. Here again it might at first glance seem that we are given the event through Bakha's consciousness, but what emerges is really a version of the ceremony that renders it a composite formed out of three slightly variant codes. It is the exotic event of the popular white imagination, an anthropological description and, at the same time, a lesson in the aesthetic appreciation of the Orient. Consider the exotica in "gold embroidered silk", "brass images", "priest sat half naked", "tuft of hair ... inscrutable knot". And now the anthropologist's voice: "paraphernalia of brass utensils ... other ritualistic objects", now shifting towards searching equivalent terms in the reader's experience: "morning service", "loud soprano", "unknown god" and so on. Much of the rest of the passage is in an equally distorting, consider-the-beauty-of-oriental-form, tone. You can hear it in "dark haired and supple", "sacred thread throwing into relief the elegant curves of his graceful body", "hard voice jarring on the bell which tinkled into unison with the brass notes of the conch" and so on. What we get is not Bakha's vision, or even the vision of one who lives in the place, but that of someone visiting a strange country. And here, more specifically because of the particular detail that composes this world—it would have been slightly different (no inscrutability!) if it had been the African or say, Ameri-Indian scene—it is the view of the white man in the Orient.

I do not want to make more of this aspect of the novel. I would like, however, to point out that almost as a direct consequence of the empirical or positivistic 'technical' attitude, embedded in the privileged controlling discourse, and the world-view such an attitude is correlate with, the solu-

One that seems most appealing to Bakha (and to us) in the end, is neither the nationalism of Gandhi or the Communism of Iqbal Nath. Progress, the novel seems to conclude, will come, slowly but surely through the advanced technology of the "water closet". One cannot forget, whatever Anand's claims about his political commitment is, that this would also be at root the liberal-imperialist solution.

We move on to a consideration of the characters in *Untouchable*. One can easily demonstrate that these too are etched in keeping with the tenets of an imperialist world-view. Bakha to start with. He is, we are told right at the beginning, a cut above the other outcasts who are, as a rule "content with their lot" (p. 9). Besides he is "a bit superior to his job". He "looked intelligent, even sensitive, with a sort of dignity that does not belong to an ordinary scavenger, who's as a rule uncouth and unclean. It was perhaps," Anand continues, "his absorption in his task that gave him the look of distinction, or his exotic dress, however loose and ill-fitting, that lifted him above odorous world." (p. 17) Bakha is also distinguished from the other "common" sweepers, even from his brother Bakhu, because he is a good sportsman and a hard worker, and is, unlike his lazy, selfish, fox-like father, for instance, a tiger – direct, generous, principled, hard-working ; and endowed with a real sense of duty. He likes the open country : the land the British loved, as much as they hated its people. In many ways Bakha is a "Public School" boy. What I am trying to put across is that Bakha establishes his real humanity, against the vaguely sub-human general run of Indians not only because he is not like them, but because he is more like a real (white) human being. His status as hero as well as the entire argument about untouchability is predicated on this.

This is one side of Bakha. There is however another aspect to him that falls more in line with the exploitative patronization of the tribals and lower classes. These people were regarded like the land, as good, in a primitive elemental sort of way, in need of protection against landlords and money-lenders. They were childlike, innocent, instinctive (and of course of invaluable use in the plantations), uncorrupted by the evil religion and culture of the upper classes from whom the British had more to fear, and who were regarded as wily, degenerate and lazy. Consider this passage, often quoted as evidence of Anand's mastery over style.

He worked away earnestly, quickly, without loss of effort. Brisk, yet steady, his capacity for active application to the task he had in hand seemed to flow like

*constant water from a natural spring. Each muscle of his body, hard as a rock when it came into play, seemed to shine forth like glass. He must have had immense pent-up resources lying deep in his body, for he rushed along with considerable skill and alacrity from one doorless latrine to another, cleaning, brushing, pouring phenol. (p. 16, my emphasis)*

Bakha is repeatedly described as behaving “instinctively”, as having a fine physique like that of a thorough-bred-animal. He is referred to as a tiger, a lion, a bear, a horse, as say, in “his broad, frank face ordinarily so human, so variable, so changing with its glistening high cheek bones, its broad nose, the nostrils of which dilated like those of an Arab horse ...” (p. 59). One of the more entertaining of these images comes up when Bakha’s sister Sohini is molested by the priest. Bakha is infuriated and responds in the true spirit of patriarchal society, where the attack on the woman is regarded, not so much as violence to her person as an affront to the family’s good name. All Bakha’s “instinctive” (p. 70) manliness is aroused when Sohini is attacked. He has a “wild desire to retaliate”, and he becomes “a superb specimen of humanity ... his fine form rising like a tiger at bay”. This, Anand tells us, is the “highest moment of his strength” (p. 71).

The positive terms in which the character of Bakha is composed closely matches the Victorian stereotype of what was ‘good’, ‘manly’ – and human. The value set of this world-view however, is equally clearly reflected in the negative image in which a host of minor characters are represented. Rakha : “short, long faced, black stumpy little man” (p. 39) is also lazy, dirty, diseased, irresponsible and selfish. There is a detailed description of him on pp. 92-93. Bakha’s father is irritable, bullying, childish, diseased lazy, sly, a “fox” (p. 35). The priest : greedy, dissolute, lecherous. He is “stricken with a congenial weakness” of both body and mind and “brazened by authority” (p. 31). Bakha’s friends, Anand writes, “sat or stood in the sun, showing their dark hands and feet, they had a curiously lackadaisical, lazy, lousy look about them ... The taint of the little prison cells of their one-roomed homes lurked in them, even in the outdoor air.” (p. 38) Their poverty is touched with evil. Gulabi quarrelsome, selfish irrational, unreliable, jealous, greedy.

What one might ask about Bakha’s mother, his sister Sohini, and the good Havildhar Charat Singh who gives Bakha the hockey stick ? One at a time. Mothers especially dead mothers, who have served their husbands and sons faithfully, are owed some respect. But one must also admit that

Anand's personal involvement with the mother figure, who is in his work always deified, breaks across the consistency of the more mechanical worldview. Sohini, lazy though she is, 'redeems' herself in the classical way open to women : through her beauty. Anand describes her in a way that turns her into a figurine, and in so doing arrives at a diction totally reduced to the most unselfconscious cliché. She is the Indian goddess, the sculpted Khajuraho figure (as against Bakha who is a *natural* god). Inevitably, she is also seen as the temptress, the alluring oriental beauty guilty of the fall of so many men. We come to the Havildhar, who is Indian all right but, one must forget, is a passionate hockey player.

Similar strictures, I believe, mark much of our writing and thinking in English or otherwise. Its distorting effects are only too clear. By reincarnating an ideology designed to suppress and destroy us, and by manipulating us in such a way that we accept its designs uncritically, as realist, such discourses fix the Indian reader into a contradictory situation that I believe is archetypal. A colonial light still palls the air.

#### NOTES

- 1 Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar, "Literature as Ideological Form : Some Marxist Propositions", *The Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 3, 1978, pp. 4-12. Reprinted in A.K. Pugh, V.J. Lee and J. Swann ed. *Language and Language Use* (London : HER, 1980), pp. 290-309.
- 2 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York : Pantheon Books, 1978) and *Covering Islam* (New York : Pantheon Books, 1981). Also Susie Tharu, "Constructing the Orient", *New Quest* 43 (1982), pp. 53-58.
- 3 Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter Insurgency" in Ranajit Guha ed. *Subaltern Studies II* (Delhi : OUP, 1983), p. 9. The work of other 'Subaltern' historians Shahid Amin, Gyan Pandey and especially Dipesh Chakravarty is also of interest.
- 4 The Santal rebellion of 1855. Here used metaphorically to represent a whole chain of rebellions that took place over the 19th century.
- 5 Guha, p. 26.
- 6 Of Anand's Bloomsbury friends, only Orwell stood by him consistently. Leonard Woolf's statement is reported in Saros Cowasjee, *So Many Freedoms* (Delhi : OUP, 1977), p. 24.
- 7 Guha, p. 33.
- 8 Mulk Raj Anand, *Coolie* (Bombay : Kutub-Popular, no date. Originally published 1932), p. 11.
- 9 I refer to the substantial body of work that followed Barthes 1977, "Structural Analysis of Narratives", reprinted in Pugh et al. ed. pp. 244-73. This was cross fertilized by the work of Macherey and Balibar in *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Hall (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). Originally published 1966. Macherey's later work, cited above, as well as what has come to be known as the *Screen* debate, the principal protagonists of which are Heath, McCabe, Wollen, Mulvey and Willemsen, is perhaps the most useful. I draw here on McCabe's "Realism and the Cinema : Notes on Some Brechtian Theses", *Screen*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 7-27.
- 10 Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (Delhi : Orient PB, 1970), pp. 18-19. All further references in brackets are to this edition.

## POPULAR AND AUTHENTIC FICTION : TOWARDS A DIFFERENTIATING PROCESS

SUBHA DASGUPTA

One can well speak of the existence of a "cultivated circuit" and a "popular circuit"<sup>1</sup> in the context of a western society and classify texts as belonging to one or the other, but the line may not be as clearly demarcated in a third world country where general social conditions are different and where the publishing scene presents a totally different picture with its fragile economy, its high illiteracy rates and the competition from fastsellers of richer countries as well as from publishing in several different local languages. As an example of the difference is the fact that paperbacks in the modern sense are just entering the scene in Bengal. The marketing conditions required for a paperback "never printed in less than some tens of thousands of copies, and ... seldom sold at more than the equivalent of an hour's wages per volume"<sup>2</sup> – does not exist in Bengal with its small reading public. Various factors then make it difficult to classify Bengali novels as belonging to one circuit or the other, although the lines are becoming clearer and clearer as days go by.

Classifications for that matter can always be questioned and the answers, if justified, would point to the need for such classifications. Sales is no criterion as the same bestseller list might show a novel by Hemingway and one by Leon Uris<sup>3</sup>, nor are statistical studies proving the presence of constants foolproof. It is a study of the differences in the techniques used to create the formal character of a text which reveals the existence of two different communicative approaches and hence two sets of texts. The aesthetic intent is revealed by the approaches and this in turn determines the text's relation to reality thus providing an answer to the need for such classification. In this paper we would be looking at just one of the levels creating the formal character of a text, the narrational level or the level of discourse bringing to discourse the meaning attributed to it by Roger Fowler, "the speech participation and attitudinal colouring of the author" as distinguished from the "text (the shape of the message)"<sup>4</sup>. Even restricting ourselves to this level we find that in one set of texts the text constitutional principle is to probe and to present a total rendering in a historical and spatial context, or in other words to bring into operation a demythicizing process. While in the other it is that of using a convention for a particular purpose – for the creation of a recognizable world where probing means a re-presentation of facts already known. It is also the superim-



Position of a simple structure on the created world, a structure made up of elements presented in absolute terms, devoid of dialectics in their relationship with one another. The whole principle leads to a process of mythologizing.

The two texts that we would be looking at in this paper are Bimal Mitra's *Saheb Bibi Golam* and Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay's *Hansuli Banker Upokatha*. The rationale for this choice is that both are texts well received by the reading public, that is, their readership was never restricted to any particular circuit, and both in a general manner deal with the passage of time and the gradual decline and annihilation of a particular generation although in one of the texts the experience is urban and in the other rural.

As far as larger conventions are concerned we see in *Saheb Bibi Golam* an attempt to keep to a single point of view which is that of the author-narrator's, while in *Hansuli Banker Upokatha* there is a constant shift in perspective. Written from an external perspective, there are moments in *Hansuli Banker Upokatha* when the external point of view merges with the point of view of one of the principle characters and we get some perfect instances of omniscient narration. The places in which they merge become important signifying points. Thus when Banoari in the text reasons with himself :

কাজ অনেক । বনওয়ারীর এক দণ্ড ব'সে থাকলে চলে ? ভাই কালোশশী, তোমাকে ভাল তো বাসি, কিন্তু উপায় কি ? বুকের ছাপ একবার মনে লাগলে কি আর ওঠে ? ... কিন্তু যার উপায় নাই, তার জন্তে কেঁদে কেটে মনপারাপ ক'রেই বা লাভ কি ? ... "পভু", তুমিই বনওয়ারীকে বাঁচিয়ে। বাঘ-ভুয়োর-সাপ-ঝড়-বান - এ সব থেকে বাঁচাতে বলে না বনওয়ারী, বনওয়ারীকে এই সব অসুখ করণ থেকে বাঁচিয়ে। (p. 24)

(There is much to do. How can Banoari sit still for a moment ? Dear Kalosashi, I love you no doubt, but what can I do ? Can the tinge of [love's] colour once imprinted on the mind be ever removed ? ... But what is the use of crying and fretting for something out of one's reach ? ... Lawd, you must save Banoari. Tigers, - bears - snakes - storms - floods - Banoari does not ask you to save him from any of these, save Banoari from all these wrong doings.)

The merging of his viewpoint with that of the author's expresses a nucleus of thought which is at the core of the value system in the text. The lines are a statement of the basic ethic of the community, something which holds the community together and transforms the individual from a being given to impetuous primitive desires to a responsible social person. In *Saheb Bibi Golam* on the other hand, elaborate and convoluted devices are made use of to keep to a single point of view. Characters are

brought into the text simply in order to provide information. Their role as agents or actors are forgotten and they are reduced to mere 'informants'. Often we have sentences such as :

বেণী বলে—ওই যে পানের ডিবে হাতে বড়োপানি মেয়েমানুষকে দেখলেন—ওই হলো বড়মাঠাকরুন। মেজ-বাবু ওঁকে ভরি ভয় করেন। (p. 120)

(Beni says, "Over there, that oldish woman with the small casket of betel—she is Boromathakrun – Mejobabu is very afraid of her.)

Similar strained methods are also used when a shift in the time sequence becomes necessary. The following sentence occurs when the focal point is being transferred from the present to the past :

ভূতনাথের সাইকেলের চাকার ঘূর্ণায়িত তরঙ্গে ক্রমে ক্রমে উদ্বেলিত হতে লাগলো তার বিস্তৃতপ্রায় কাহিনী-মুখর অতীত। (p. 49)

(The almost oblivious, eventful past gradually resurged in the revolving waves of the wheels of Bhootanath's bicycle.)

An association is sought between the revolving of the wheels and the turn of past events but there is an evident conceptual and stylistic incompatibility in the words used between সাইকেলের চাকা (wheels of the cycle) and ঘূর্ণায়িত তরঙ্গ (revolving waves) and উদ্বেলিত (surged). The sentence is an extreme example where craftsmanship has brought about an artificiality jarring to the sensibilities. Elsewhere as well, where the focal point has to be changed in order to give a historical perspective to the events in the text, the author-narrator is placed in various situations where he overhears facts related to the past or even other contemporary political events. Having no connection with the action of the text these situations appear superimposed and bear marks of a laboured but empty technical exercise.

The inhabitants and the events of Hansulibank are linked with history in a very different manner. There three archetypal folk figures, an ancient grey-haired, half mad but shrewd woman, a wandering singer without any familial or socio-economic ties and a male community dancer endowed with feminine attributes and graces merge the present of Hansulibank with the past and the future. They do this by traditional means through songs and stories of folk origins. Thus the narrator makes use of elements from the oral tradition, in spite of the written genre and because of his use of the oral tradition, the text, as it were, stretches back beyond grammatical tenses to the wider stream of time.

It follows then that the authors in the two texts are working in two

different systems. In one he works within a certain communicative framework with its own irrefutable conventions which are in this case a consistency in the use of pronouns and of tenses. On no account will he go outside the conventions, the assumption being that the written genre demands this particular framework. The author working in the other system does not rigidly adhere to convention nor to any particular framework. Rather he consistently goes outside and shatters our idea of a framework as he tries to reach semantic levels which are unique. Hence multi-personal representations and multiple points of view are freely used as also a very flexible use of tenses.

The two essentially contrary standpoints give way to a series of differences. A comparison of two representative passages from the two texts show several different characteristic features. The first instance is from *Saheb Bibi Golam* :

ভঙ্গ-মৃত্যু-সঙ্গমের লীলাবিলাস কবে ষাট-সত্তর-আশী-একশ' বছর আগে এ-পাড়ার বাড়িগুলোতে প্রথম শুরু হয়েছিল আভিজাত্যের পরশ্রোতে, আজ এই ক'টি বছরের মধ্যে তা যেম বইতে শুরু করেছে নিতান্ত মধ্যবিস্তৃপ্তিতে । (p. 28)

(The wanton play of birth, death and copulation begun sixty-seventy-eighty-hundred years ago in the houses of this area in aristocracy's swiftly-flowing stream, now, within these few years, has started taking an outright middle course.)

The second instance is from *Hansuli Banker Upokatha* :

কালে কালে কাল পালটায় । কালারুদ্দুর চড়ক পাটায় ঘুরে কত বছর এল, কত গেল, কে তার হিসেব করে ! আবার রাত্রে হুটাদ গল্প বলে গাজনের । বনওয়ারীর মত কাহার মাতব্বর যারা, তারা উদাস হয়ে গভীর অন্ধকারে ভরা বাঁশবনের নিকে তাকিয়ে ভাবে, বিশেষারা হয়ে যায়, কালে কালে কাল কেমন করে পালটায়, সে জানে কোপাই বেটী । দাঁড়াও গিয়ে কোপাইয়ের কূলে । দেখবে, আজ যেখানে দহ, কাল সেখানে চর দেখা দেয় ; শক্ত পাথুরে নদীর পাড় ধ'সে সেখানে দহ হয় । (p. 208)

(Times change with the movement of time. Who can keep an account of the years that came and went with the cyclic motions of Kalaruddu's 'charak wheel'? On dark nights Suchand tells stories of Gajan. Banoari and other heads like him stare distractedly at the deep darkness filled bamboo groves and think. They are confounded. How does time change with the movement of times? That knows 'Kopai beti'. Go and stand beside the banks of Kopai. You will see the deep waters of today give way to dry land the next day, the solid stone edges of the river fall and create deep eddies.)

Conceived over a large canvas of time, the events in both the texts cover generations, and the passage of time (the subject of the examples cited above) is often expressed in the narration. The first example is initially a descriptive account of the houses in a certain part of the city and the

changes in their characteristics affected by time. The involved structure of the sentence contains two metaphors that belong to the literature of bygone age, that of time and the swiftly flowing stream, and the concept of life, death and copulation as a kind of play. Used in that particular age they were vital metaphors, but with constant use they lose their connotative value and in modern literature cease to have any meaning. The sentence, however, does not keep the two metaphors apart, but tries to merge them bringing in a mixed metaphor where the elements of one do not blend into the other. When জন্ম-মৃত্যু-সঙ্গমের লীলাবিলাস (the wanton game of birth, death and copulation) is linked with বইতে শুরু করেছে (has begun to flow), the meaning becomes obscure. The syntax also does not guide the emphasis on nouns nor do the rhythms correspond to any semantic significance. In fact, as the presence of compound consonants and internal rhythms reveal, the lexical units are arranged with a view to a phonesthemic effect. The intention of the author then is not to arrive at signification but to produce a literary language, its determining factors being the use and development of metaphors and of those metaphors that are recognizable as being part of a literary tradition, and of a lexical and syntactical arrangement designed for its phonesthemic effect. The design of the whole is to induce a passive response and not an active participation.

The second example is closer to the spoken language as is evidenced by the absence of compound consonants and abstract nouns (except the noun কাল ('time')) and by the use of alliterative sequence. That the focus is on meaning is apparent from the first sentence where the emphasis is guided on the monosyllabic noun কাল (CVC) which follows the reduplication of the bisyllabic (CVCV) adverbial form of the same word. In the next sentence also the rhythm of the words focus attention on the noun বছর (year) ensconced as it is between the rotative words কত বছর এল, কত গেল. In fact, the rotative sound parallels the cyclical movement of Shiva's wheel symbolizing time and is used to punctuate the verbal space of the paragraph. Towards the centre of the paragraph again the movement is taken up in the repetition of the first sentence as part of a larger sentence and in the last sentence the cyclical movement is once more reinforced by the repetition of identical phonetic, lexical and grammatical forms 'আজ যেখানে দহ, কাল সেখানে চর'. The reader is urged to feel the meaning through the rhythm. It must not be assumed, however, that the sentences get fixed within the repetitive structures. After the establish-

ment of the cyclical movement they continue to move forward in the textual space, refusing stratification or complacency.

The reader does come across a certain amount of rhetoric in the exclamatory words of the second sentence, but it is explained in the next sentence when the author relates that it is Suchand, the old story-teller of Hansulibank talking on a dark night. That explains the use of the local name for Shiva, and coupled with the darkness and the old lady, the rhetoric becomes a part of a particular ethos, of a deep ingrained philosophy inseparable from life experiences. The reference to Banoari and people like him as well as to the deep darkness of the bamboo groves and to the river Kopai, the latter spoken of as only a 'Kahar' of Hansulibank can speak of the river 'কোপাই বেটা' (daughter Kopai) transforms the somewhat abstract first sentence into a direct experience. The experience is further reinforced by a concrete simile, the river Kopai changing its course and creating totally different landmarks. The author then is unravelling a thought process as it appears in the experience of a people through language. The rhythmic structure and the change to the generalized second person in the last sentence makes the reader a direct participant, but at the same time traces of irony in the use of the local name for Shiva, in the confusion of Banoari and others as they try to fathom the mystery of time, keep the reader at an objective distance. The reader is thus involved not by way of identification, but keeping in view the identity of the other.

If in *Hansuli Banker Upokatha* language gives shape to a particular experience, in *Saheb Bibi Golam* language is often used solely on the informative level. The expression of mood or sentiment that follows the information, with its stress on literariness, often has very little connection with the information. This results in the creation of a hollow language, emptied of context. Bhootanath looking at the skeleton of Bowthan thinks :

তার মনে হলো জীবনের যেন এক মহা অর্থ চোখের সামনে উদ্ঘাটিত হয়ে গেল এক মুহূর্তে। মৃত্যু যেন আর মৃত্যুই রইল না। মনে হলো জীবনেরই আর এক মহাপ্রকাশ যেন মৃত্যু। (p.705)

(It seemed to him that a great meaning of life revealed itself at that instant. Death seemed no more to be death. It seemed death was one of the grand revelations of life itself.)

The lack of balance between the situation and the sentiment expressed — the sight of the skeleton leading to the revelation that death is a sublime expression of life — leads to an ostentatious and empty language. Behind the use of such language works a disposition to offer smooth and pleasing

statements regarding large universal issues. Hence on the subject of life again we have a statement 'জীবন সুন্দর কিন্তু জীবন তো কঠিনও বটে' (life is beautiful but life is also severe). We also find in the structure of the sentence a strategy common to proverbs by which they seek to arrest the interest of the reader. This strategy lies in the formation of correlative structures through contrasts or antitheses. Life is beautiful but also severe. Peculiar to the proverb also is a kind of parallelism or a repetitive structure seen here in the repetition of the subject 'life' before each of its qualifiers. An effort has been made in the sentence to camouflage the structure of the proverb and give it an ordinary sentence structure by the inclusion of the particles *তো* and *বটে*. The sentence, however, acts on the reader like any other proverb. It confronts the reader as a universal truth when it is only a generalization made on a particular phenomenon. With its exclusive final note it gives a schematic form to various states of reality. Similar instances abound in the narration: 'কলকাতার একটি কথায় রাজ্য ওঠে, রাজ্য পড়ে।' (p. 31) (A single word in Calcutta makes kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall.) or 'কিন্তু সংসারে যারা পোষ মানে তারাই বুঝি কষ্ট পায় বেশি।' (p. 59) (In this world those who get involved are perhaps those who get involved are perhaps those who suffer the most.) The world of the novel thus gets composed on a basis of simplicity and of abstract generalizations.

In the previous example cited from *Hanusli Banker Upokatha* we had also come across reflection on a large universal issue, but there it came not in an abstract manner but as part of an ethos which was lived in. In its contextualization it escaped the abstraction, the fixed quality of proverbs and received the complexity and fluidity of life processes.

That the world in the other text is rendered in simple and static terms is also revealed in narrative codes around particular thematic areas. At the very beginning of the text history or historical movements in the city of Calcutta occupy the reader's interest through a number of pages and expectations are aroused that history is going to be an integral part of the text. The succeeding sequences soon belie the expectation for there the pivot functions have their origins in chance happenings and not in historical processes. On the level of language the rhetorical potential of the word 'history' is exploited to the full and in so doing its meaning is rendered obscure. ইতিহাসের সিংহদ্বার (the wide gates of history) in a recurrent metaphor followed by ইতিহাসের প্রতি পাতায় (on each single page of history) and then later on by such phrases as :

ওবিনয়বাবুর ইতিহাস চলতে লাগলো কর্কশ বন্ধুর পথ ধরে। সে ইতিহাস বড়বাড়ির মতো নিশ্চল স্থায়ী ইতিহাস নয়। (p. 415)

(Subinaybabu's history proceeded along a rough, uneven road. That history was not the stagnant history that was Borobari's.)

With the multiplication of such diverse metaphors the connotation of the word 'history' becomes confused.

Along with history, the present century and historical memory are personified resulting in stratification. That in any case they are prevented from being processes is shown in other areas as well. Different ages in history, for instance, are delineated in one or two sentences :

পাঠান আর মোগল আমল দেখতে দেখতে মিলিয়ে গেল। ... তাই এলেন রায় রায়ান রাজবল্লভ বাহাদুর হুতানুতীতে। মহারাজ নন্দকুমারের ছেলে রায় রায়ান রাজা গুরুদাস এলেন। ... এলেন ওয়ারেন হেস্টিংস-এর দেওয়ান কান্তবাবু ... (pp. 30-31)

(The age of the Pathans and the Mughals gradually disappeared ... So came Ray Rayan Rajballav Bahadur in Sutanuti. Maharaj Nandakumar's son Ray Rayan Raja Gurudas came ... came the steward of Warren Hastings, Kantobabu ...)

Here as well, the reader's attention is focussed on the series of names from history familiar to him and on the stylistic mannerism involved in the joining together of the sentences.

Historical movements, dialectical processes are further nullified as changes in history are transformed into magical operations :

লোকে একদিন সকালবেলা ঘুম থেকে উঠে দেখলে ইন্দ্রপ্রস্থ আর দিল্লী কোথায় তলিয়ে গিয়েছে। তার বদলে এখানে এই হুম্মরবনের জলো হাওয়ার মাটিতে গড়িয়ে উঠেছে আর এক আরব উপাখ্যান। ভেঙ্কিবাজি যেন। (pp. 30-31)

(Men one day saw on awakening that Indraprastha and Delhi had been submerged somewhere. Instead here in this moist soil of the Sunderbans had sprung another Arabian tale. As if by magic !)

The author intervenes in the last exclamation to underline the nature of wizardry in the entire operation.

The 19th century is presented in *Saheb Bibi Golam* as a series of nomenclatures. Gaining prominence over all is the series stating affluence. There is, for instance, an enumeration of the various divisions of the house : 'ওদিকে ভিত্তিখানা, তোরাখানা, বাবুর্চিখানা, নহবতখানা, দপ্তরখানা, গাড়িখানা, কাছারিখানা ...' (p. 40) (on that side the water-carrier's place, the treasury, the cookhouse, the orchestra-room, the office, the garage, the court-house ...) or a cataloguing of various types of ornaments :

একবার পোউতড়া ভেঙে বিঁচে তার ভাজে, বিঁচে তার পুরনো ভলে অমণ ভাজে, অমণও পুরনো হয়ে গেলে চুড়

হচ্ছে। হয়তো এবার পুজোর হলো কমল হীরের নাকছাবি, আবার কালিপুজোর হবে চুনি বসানো কান-ফুল, মুক্তোর চিক, নয়তো পারা বসানো লকেটওয়ালা চন্দ্রহার ... (p. 721)

(Once the muff-chain is being altered to make a broad necklace, the necklace after a time to an armlet, again, after another passage of time, to a bracelet. Perhaps in these Pujas a nose stud of a particular kind of diamond has been made, for the Kalipuja's there will be earrings studded with rubies, a close fitting pearl necklace, or a muff-chain with an emerald locket ...)

and often the range of carriages are named ল্যান্ডো, ফিটন, বগি, ল্যান্ডোলেট, দশ ফুকরে ড্রাইনবেরি, ব্যারক ... (p. 298) (landau, phaeton, buggy, landaulette, ten horse-powered Brownberry, barrouche). By their very presence, these words with restrictive usage elicit belief from their readers. They are repeated on every occasion, covering a large part of the textual space. The eyes are dazzled, although in a manner which is somewhat vague, for the reader is not specialized enough to distinguish the different items. The second set of nomenclatures encountered repeatedly relates to famed classical music. It comes as a corollary to affluence. পুরিয়ার খেয়াল (p. 228), 'চমেলি ফুলি চম্পা' (p. 185), জয়জয়ন্তীর ধ্রুপদ (p. 175) (kheyal in the Puriya raga, 'Chomeli Phuli Champa', dhrupada in the Jayjayanti raga) figure often in the text. It is not what music does or what it means in the entire context that matters. What does is that the words pertaining to classical music be there and be recognized as such. Series of complex experiences are thus substituted by indexes, by external forms.

Other aspects of the transitional society are presented in similar forms. Religious, social and political movements appear as a succession of names and of well-known quotations. Each of these aspects becomes autonomous units of meaning. This is the particular privilege of prose narrative where each constitutional element has a potential autonomy unlike the iconic text, the poem for instance, where the compositional elements cannot be broken down into units of meaning.<sup>8</sup> But unless the units are taken up and linked to the main narrative movement, a total meaning is impossible. In their autonomy the units also show themselves independent of surrounding phenomena and assert their final and absolute quality.

A characteristic feature of elements that signify the transitional society is the presence of the known or the familiar. This establishes the author's place somewhere close to the reader's. On the reader's part recognition acts as a premise to the process of identification. The 'otherness' that is encountered is no more than a component existing on the mental horizon of the reader.



An instance of the 'otherness' finding expression on the lexical level is the presence of Brahmoism in the 19th century. Conceptual words belonging to the traditional Brahmo religious vocabulary are incorporated in the course of ordinary conversation giving us dialogue like :

তুমি তাকে বলে দিও মা, সাধনার পথে প্রত্যয়ের বাধাই তো বড় বাধা, অনুরাগের ক্ষেত্রেও তাই । (p. 289)

(Tell him, my daughter, in the field of Sadhana an obstruction of faith is the biggest of all obstructions, in the case of love it is the same.)

Here a superimposition of recognizable Brahmo elements, as the sole method of presenting Brahmoism, results in a burlesque of the Brahmo vocabulary and simultaneously of the 'other' or the Brahmo way of life.

The level of description also firmly establishes the world inhabited by the readers as that of the world in the text. Well-known public sites, streets and alleys are recurrent features of the descriptive passages. Often the only point to these passages is the creation of verisimilitude and passages which are there only to create verisimilitude present semantic obstacles.<sup>6</sup>

In *Hansuli Banker Upokatha* also the transitional society and its impacts form a part of the text. There the narrative codes showing the transition are linked to the proairetic codes<sup>7</sup> for the essential dilemma in the text concerns the rejection of traditional village based occupations in favour of spurious jobs around the railway lines which are more lucrative but which ultimately bring about an erosion of values. Here as well, a series of common sayings, poems and songs figure in the narration but being related to the basic dilemma they act as synthesizing elements. They are also signs of a particular region, a particular people, a particular character, and they are prophecy, the establishment of a pattern, or irony, the criticism of a pattern. No unit then exists in isolation, nor is any unit absolute or final.

In *Hansuli Banker Upokatha* history has a specific connotation, that of change, of motion, as opposed to the intemporality of village life where change is only part of a circular movement. The task of the narration is to introduce temporality into the intemporal, to cut the moorings of village life and make it a part of the flux and motion of history. Transition is a synonym for historical motion and the narration provides an apt symbol of transition in the train whose sound regularly intrudes into the discourse. The complexity of the transition is expressed in the duality of the narrative codes around the symbol—a strong resentment even as there is a slow, unacknowledged process of acceptance. The train gradually

becomes a part of the whole village community. The daily lives of the villagers are regulated by the sound of the train as it passes over the bridge and they try to bring it within their orbit by investing it with the nature of a being they understand—a god. Its infallible nature, that it always arrives at a certain time, is often brought to notice, while Banoari comments, 'টায়েন হলেই উনি ছেড়ে দেন' (p. 97) (He leaves as soon as it is time). The pronoun 'উনি' which Banoari uses for his gods is used here. The concept of time has entered even his vocabulary and it is noteworthy that he uses a mutilated form of the English word 'time' instead of the Bengali 'সময়'. It is transition primarily looked at from the point of view of the village community, of the 'other', but the sly humour in the lines bring about a double perspective, that of the reader's as well. The double perspective is inevitable where language is used as a medium and when there is a second perspective other than that of the reader. It is also something which makes discourse meaningful. In *Hansuli Banker Upokatha* it is this double perspective which gives rise to the rhythm of involvement and detachment, and brings about the basic tension that upholds the text—a deep understanding, an immense pity on the one hand, a light irony on the other, a sympathy for the traditional village community and a knowledge of the inevitable march of history that will finally engulf the community.

The two texts then exist in two different systems of writing. In one, and this may be called a novel belonging to the popular circuit, language is vehicular. It does not create the content but is merely used in conforming to the expectations of the reader. On one side, that implies the presentation of a world the reader already knows and, on the other, the arrangement within itself of the formal signs of literature. In the other system of writing language is not simply vehicular, but expressive. It creates different ranges of complexity and takes the reader through new semantic experiences.

The constitutive elements of the novel in the popular circuit, viewed together, reveal complex directives. Keeping before the reader the world familiar to him, it induces identification and identification on one level leads to identification on all other levels as well. A vicious circle comes into operation as the reader confronts his own world in the novel, goes back satisfied that his assumptions were correct, that he was following the right direction in life, continues to lead his life and returns elsewhere into the world of print where a similar novel again renews him. He

internalizes everything else that goes with this world, the established scale of values and the behavioral pattern. Thus the novel brings a stability to the institutions of a certain society and becomes an apt medium for systematization and socialization. In this it performs a function which in olden days was periodically performed by myths and rituals. Myths also by providing formalized statements of the values of society and its attitudes, helped to provide social integration and project cultural continuity.<sup>8</sup> But the perspective of the ancient myth was entirely different, originating as it did in a society so different from our own. Myths at that time were related to a primeval reality and were vital components of human civilization. The novel of the popular circuit today mythicizes in the interest of a spurious and effervescent society and reflects on itself the nature of such a society. The values it gives credence to, the system that it formulates are all gratuitously imposed, in order to keep things as they are, to preserve the status quo on all levels.

The formal elements which gained prominence in our study of the level of narration are those which correspond to the rhetoric of mythmaking. It should be stated here that, contrary to general belief, it is not the content centred on wish-fulfilment projects which identifies the mythicising process, but rather the form. In the words of Barthes :

Le mythe est une parole.... On voit par la que le mythe ne saurait être un objet, un concept, ou une idée, c'est une mode de signification, c'est une forme.<sup>9</sup>

The form consists in the presentation of phenomena not as parts of larger realities, nor in the process of being shaped by different elements in reality but as complete entities, independent and self-sufficient. It is a form which presents the partial in terms of the absolute, abolishes complexities and shapes the world on straight, simple lines.<sup>10</sup> The entire narrative process by dazzling the senses, by inducing identification, by removing the presence of the 'other' makes the reader accept without questioning. In all this myth takes us away from reality, empties history and again as Barthes explains, it represents an operative movement, actualizing a continuous defection. As opposed to this *Hansuli Banker Upokatha* tries to give us total renderings to explore multi-dimensional and dynamic relationships between phenomena thereby giving rise to a demythicizing process. Not subscribing to any external precept or convention, it creates new semantic, metaphoric and stylistic levels which make the reader come out from his complacency and live anew in some aspect of reality in all its profundity.

## NOTES

This paper is a part of my PhD thesis entitled "A definition of popular fiction in the contemporary world taking into account the work of serious writers". I am deeply grateful to Dr Amiya Dev, my thesis guide, for the orientation he gave and for his constant help in the preparation of this paper.

- 1 Robert Escarpit, *Sociologie de la littérature* (Paris 1973) pp. 72-90.
- 2 Robert Escarpit, *The Book Revolution* (London and Paris, 1966), p. 28.
- 3 Ernest Hemingway with *Islands in the Stream* and Leon Uris with *QBVII* appear on the list of ten leading hardcover fictions in *Publisher's Weekly*, 1970.
- 4 Roger Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel* (London, 1977), p. 72.
- 5 See J.M. Lotman in "The Discrete Text and the Iconic Text", *New Literary History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Virginia, 1975), pp. 333-38.
- 6 See Roland Barthes in "L'effet de réel", *Communications* XI (Paris, 1968), pp. 87-88.
- 7 According to Roland Barthes proairetic codes are those which govern the reader's construction of the plot. See R. Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris, 1970), p. 26.
- 8 Most schools of thought on myth agree on this point. Mircea Eliade writes that myths and rituals revealed "the exemplary models for all human rites and all significant human activities—diet or marriage, work or education, art or wisdom." (*Myth and Reality* (New York, 1963), p. 8) Bronislaw Malinowski states, "... it (myth) expresses, enhances and codifies belief, it safeguards and enforces morality ; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man." *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 9 *Mythologies* (Paris, 1957), p. 194.
- 10 Barthes also states, "... il (le mythe) abolit la complexité des actes humains, leur donne la simplicité des essences, il supprime toute dialectique, toute remontée au-delà du visible immédiat, il organise un monde sans contradictions parce que sans profondeur, un monde étalé dans l'évidence, il fonde une clarté heureuse, les choses ont l'air de signifier toutes seules." (*Ibid.*, p. 231)

# **POLITICAL THEATRE AND THE INADEQUACY OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

**EUGÈNE A. VAN ERVEN**

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Of the three major literary genres drama, when performed, has the most directly measurable sociological impact : artistic creation and reception are simultaneous. Due to its immediate audio-visual contact with a relatively large audience, the theatre has always been potentially the most effective literary medium for transmitting social and political messages. Because of social conventions and psychological peer pressure in the theatre, the spectator is more or less 'forced' to remain receptive to the theatrical message. A novel or a television programme allows for mental relaxation : a reader or viewer is at complete social and psychological liberty to end the communication whenever he or she wants. The greater urgency and intensity of the communication by live actors on stage also give drama an advantage over the relatively passive, one-way exchange of signs in the cinema. A film is a finished product whereas a play is recreated during every new performance. Francis Fergusson has also noted that "the theatre artist cannot practice his art without real people assembled before a real stage ; a theatre without an audience is a contradiction in terms. That is why politics and theatre are necessarily so close to the public mood and the public mind of their times."<sup>1</sup>

It is by no means an exaggeration to claim that some of the greatest writers of modern drama have been politically oriented artists. Many modern plays express, in form and content, the commitment of their authors to radical politics. Furthermore the most influential formal innovations in the drama of the past century were inspired primarily by political subject matter struggling to transcend conventional forms in order to find a more appropriate means of expression.<sup>2</sup> The naturalism of Zola, Ibsen and Hauptmann comes to mind, but also the expressionism of Kaiser, Toller and their American successors Rice, Dos Passos and O'Neill. Bernard Shaw and Bertolt Brecht were arguably the two playwrights who were most responsible for reviving drama as a respected genre after more than a century or decline. Their political plays continue to exert a strong influence even today because like nobody else these artists understood how to blend seriousness with entertainment and didactics with humour.

Possibly even more than in the first half of the century, the 'second wave' of modern drama has been dominated by socio-political concerns.<sup>3</sup> The large protest movement that paralyzed many American universities and

most European capitals in the autumn of 1967 and the spring and summer of 1968, left a prominent mark on the performing arts. It inspired theatre with a new socio-political consciousness that proved more durable than the rather short-lived utopias advocated by the protesting students.

The new political commitment in the theatre was most evident in the increasing activities of the politicized playwrights, directors and actors who decided to place their art at the service of the oppressed people in society. Consequently, they turned their backs on the plush, elite cultural temples of the capitals and implanted themselves in working-class neighbourhoods and rural areas with the intention of creating political theatre that deals with the specific socio-economic and political issues of their audiences. Most of these young artists had been involved in lengthy discussions on the political functions of art during the occupations of university auditoria and theatres that had accompanied the unrest of 1968. Their leaders had studied the cultural theories of Mao Zedong, Gramsci, Marcuse, Lenin and Trotsky, and on that basis they had founded their own versions of cultural revolution. Thus they resolved to enlist their creative talents in the service of agricultural and industrial labourers in order to awaken their political and cultural identity and to help them oppose it to the dominant bourgeois culture. The seventies, then, were the decades of the popular political theatre, a truly international movement that was expressive of and conducive to the rise of radical political consciousness.

Most drama critics would readily recognize the increasing sociopolitical tendencies of the modern theatre but they still continue to analyze it with traditional or more sophisticated means of textual criticism. It is highly surprising that socio-political considerations do not enter more frequently into the books and articles that deal with contemporary drama. This problem could be extended to include all literary criticism: the sociological component of literature is still too often ignored or rejected in the dusty language and literature departments with the facile accusation of "ideologically coloured" with which the textually oriented critic elevates his own bias to the level of an absolute.

The Yugoslavian critic Filip Kumbatovic is correct in observing that even today established programmes studying the performing arts or the theatre are still very much a rarity in the academic world.<sup>4</sup> Only a very limited number of European and American universities have minuscule departments of Theatre Studies. The most common way of approaching

and theatre is still through the various departments of language literature, which generally favour critical approaches to the dramatic as literary text.<sup>5</sup>

Textual drama criticism ignores an essential (and for political drama essential) element : the sociological sources and implications of the theatrical performance. Hardly any dramatist (untheatrical, novelistic playwrights like the later O'Neill perhaps excepted) would be prepared to see that his work manifests itself fully in a solitary reading. Friedrich Schlegel is quite explicit in this matter :

Wenn ich das Publikum als einen Faktor eingeführt habe, so mag das viele befremden ; doch wie ein Theater ohne Publikum nicht möglich ist, so ist es auch sinnlos, ein Theaterstück als eine Art Ode mit verteilten Rollen im luftleeren Raum anzusehen und zu behandeln. Ein Theaterstück wird durch das Theater, in dem man es spielt, etwas Sichtbares, Hörbares, Greifbares, damit aber auch Unmittelbares.<sup>6</sup>

Drama reaches its fullest potential only in performance, i.e., when it becomes theatre in the direct audio-visual dialogue between stage and auditorium, actor and spectator. Moreover, in the diversified experiments of the contemporary theatre, the dominance and the permanence of the written text have been effectively drawn into question, while more and more emphasis is being given to visual effects, mime and improvisation.

I am far from arguing that textual analysis has no place in drama criticism. Rather, I would suggest that any thorough discussion of political drama must include an analysis of the text in combination with a study of its social framework : the play's genesis, its production, distribution and reception. Thus, for modern political drama, the links with the intellectual environment in which it was generated are of great importance. The Naturalist theatre, for example, cannot be fully appreciated without understanding its close connection to Positivism and the industrial revolution. More recently, the radical popular theatre that developed in the wake of the 1968 protest movement bases itself on a completely redefined concept of culture derived from Gramsci, Marcuse, Mao and other radical political thinkers. Rather than creating a purely contemplative art in the lofty heights beyond class structure, the contemporary radical popular theatre offers itself as a weapon to the proletariat in its cultural revolution against the dominant bourgeois culture. Such a self-conscious awareness of the dialectics between art and social change, between theatrical innovations and specific ideological debates, demands a sociological analysis.

performance. Theatre is unique in that its artistic recreation and its social reception are simultaneous: Opposed to the series of individual contacts between author and reader that takes place in the 'consumption' of printed literature, the theatrical performance gathers these individual moments of interaction into one collective experience. The organization of the theatrical space is very important for the effective operation of this theatrical communication.

In his *Eléments d'une sociologie du spectacle*, Richard Demarcy links the sociological aspects of theatrical space with the political events of the mid 60s.<sup>11</sup> The demonstrations and the accompanying discussions of art and politics inspired young actors to look for forms of direct contact with the popular masses. Since in those days politics took place in the streets, so did the theatre. Democracy claims that the events of 1968 were also instrumental in rejecting the traditional architectural constraints of theatrical space. After the May uprising, more and more radical troupes implanted themselves in popular suburbs.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the modern formalistic innovations were developed to abolish the separation between stage and auditorium through audience participation. The political commitment of the modern theatre is basically motivated by an urge to re-establish contact with all segments of society and by a need to express solidarity with the oppressed masses. Underlying the recent European demands for theatrical reforms and federal subsidies is the assumption that the theatre fulfills an indispensable function in society and religion and that, therefore, it should not be left to commercial enterprise.

Claims concerning the theatre's quintessential position in society are supported by sociologists who, adopting an anthropological perspective, have traced the phenomenon of drama back to its ritualistic origins. They see theatre as developing from an innate need in man to express himself and his existential predicament. Most of these anthropological searches for the essence of theatricality arrive at the *ur*-form of drama in the ritual of primitive religious celebrations, and by extension, argue that the prehistoric priest was the first actor.<sup>13</sup>

Particularly for modern drama the connections with the intellectual environment in which the plays are generated are of greater sociological interest than the prehistoric origins of the theatre. Several historical (or genetic) literary structuralists have attempted to systematize the relation between theatre and society, an endeavour which, unfortunately, has not always steered clear of positivism and is often too mechanical to account



For the many variations in context, contact and individual sensibilities that produce the enigmatic dialectics between society and art. Lucien Goldmann, Arnold Hauser and Raymond Williams tend to consider drama as a rather passive reflection of the ideas that are dominant during its genesis. Both Hauser and Williams see the evolution of dramatic conventions in relation to larger changes in society. Thus the former explains the disappearance of classical tragedy in the context of the class struggle between aristocracy and bourgeoisie. The latter sees the creation of new dramatic forms as a function of the developing perspectives on the human condition and the world.<sup>14</sup> Goldmann, who does not really distinguish between the dramatic text and the literary text, sees literature as epitomizing the world view (*vision du monde*) of a particular social group at a given moment in history. To him the literary author is an unusually gifted individual who is better able than other members of his social group to articulate the concerns and concepts of his time.<sup>15</sup>

It is easy to go along with the assumption that literature and art are, to some degree, expressions of the society that generated them. But the contemporary radical popular theatre has made it loud and clear that it sees itself as more than a mere passive reflection of its social and intellectual environment. It seeks to be militantly involved in the reformatory process of society and its political structures.

The energetic political activities of so many present-day theatre groups are, obviously, related to their profound conviction that art can indeed make a difference in the building of a new and better world. To what extent this optimism is warranted, however, remains an open question. Discussions concerning the theatre's function in society are pointless lest they are supported by measurable facts about the theatre's effectiveness. Political success is not only contingent on the quality of the text, but also on the financial viability of the company that stages it, the quality and dedication of actors and technical personnel, and the expectations, moods and attitudes of the audiences. Many of the components constituting a theatrical performance resist objective, empirical measurement, most of all the socio-psychological impact on the spectator. Wolfgang Ismayr has pointed out that the long-term change in socio-political attitudes that all political theatre hopes to produce is well-nigh impossible to determine.<sup>16</sup> In addition, compared statistically to the millions of viewers that television attracts daily, the social influence of theatre appears negligible.

Two facts continue to overshadow considerations about the theatre's socio-political functions and effectiveness : (1) less than 5% of the audiences that attend the conventional commercial or subsidized theatres in western Europe comes from the working classes ; (2) the general consensus is that the political theatre should not be regarded as inducing massive attitude changes. Yet, a small change is better than no change at all. Furthermore, on the positive side of the balance it must be mentioned that several radical theatre groups have been extremely successful in attracting workers and farmers to their productions of political farces, satires and melodramas by catching their target audience in its working and living environment of factory cafeterias, village squares and old buildings converted into makeshift proletarian cultural centres. In this respect, the international success of Dario Fo and his Collettivo Teatrale la Comune has been phenomenal. At every performance he draws thousands of workers, housewives and students to his Palazzina Liberty theatre in Milan.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that although most radical popular theatre groups address much smaller audiences than the mass media, their art is explicitly and militantly political, intent on raising the political consciousness of their audience in a radically direct way. The commercially and government-controlled television and radio, on the other hand, address entire nations but most tone down or even suppress overt political messages in order not to alienate their large and politically diverse public.

It is by now a commonplace that literary artists have always been sensitively attuned to the preoccupation of their age. The concerns of the twentieth century seem to have been socio-political rather than metaphysical. Considering the explicit political commitment of many playwrights in the past decades it seems preposterous that so many critics still insist on textual or formalistic analysis as the only valid approach to modern drama. With Martin Esslin as their Nestor, they dismiss the ideology of writers like Bertolt Brecht as obsolete and concentrate instead on the timeless beauty of his dramatic compositions. Of course, textual criticism should not be discarded, but in order to fully appreciate the political theatre, close cooperation with the various areas of study that constitute the sociology of drama and theatre seems appropriate. Only then will the political theatre be valued for what it really is : both an aesthetic and a socio-political phenomenon.

## NOTES

- 1 Francis Fergusson, *The Human Image in Dramatic Literature* (Garden City, N.Y. : pp. 20-21.
- 2 Cf. Peter Szondi, *Theorie des modernen Dramas* (Frankfurt am Main, 1959).
- 3 The term 'second wave' was coined by the British drama critic John Russell Taylor in his book *The Second Wave : British Drama for the Seventies* (New York, 1971), p. 14.
- 4 Filip K. Kumbatovic, "Le Théâtre comme phénomène équivoque – caractère-esthétique et fonction sociale", *Maske und Kothurn*, 25 (1979), pp. 131-38.
- 5 American "Drama Departments" are only rarely theoretically oriented. Usually they teach students the techniques of acting and producing.
- 6 Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Theaterschriften und Reden* (Zürich, 1966), p. 93. "Many people may be surprised by my introduction of the audience as a factor [in the theatre] ; but just as a theatre without an audience is impossible, it is pointless to treat and consider a play as a type of Ode with divided parts in space. Theatre becomes, through the theatre building in which it is performed, something which can be seen, heard, touched, and through all that, something immediate." (My translation.)
- 7 Georges Gurvitch, "La Sociologie du théâtre," *Letters Nouvelles*, 35 (1956), pp. 196-210.
- 8 H.J. Tinchon and V.I. Azizi-Burkant, "Experimentelle Wirkungs-forschung als Publikumsforschung, *Maske und Kothurn*, 20 (1974), pp. 418-24.
- 9 J. R. Goodlad, *A Sociology of Popular Drama* (New York, 1971).
- 10 Wolfgang Ismayr, *Das Politische Theatre in Westdeutschland* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1977), pp. 429-37.
- 11 Richard Demarcy, *Eléments d'une sociologie du spectacle* (Paris, 1973).
- 12 Ariane Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil, for example, settled in an abandoned ammunition factory in Vincennes.
- 13 Cf. Julius Bab, *Das Theater im Lichter der Soziologie* (Leipzig, 1931), p. 231.
- 14 Arnold Hauser, "The Origins of Domestic Drama," in *Theory of the Modern Stage*, ed. Eric Bentley (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 430-19. Raymond Williams, *From Ibsen to Brecht* (London, 1963).
- 15 Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché* (Paris, 1955).
- 16 *Op. cit.*, p. 426.
- 17 Fo's theatre attracts an average of one and a half million spectators per year. Having over 10,000 people in their theatre on one evening is not a rarity. 70% of the audience consists of workers and their families. The remainder is made up by students and representatives of the middle class. Cf. Hannes Heer, *Dario Fo über Dario Fo* (Köln, 1980), pp. 134-5.

## MEDIEVAL INDIAN THEATRE : A STUDY IN TERMINOLOGY

SISIR KUMAR DAS

Most of the frequently used dramatic terms in various Indian languages except those borrowed from English, are of Sanskritic origin. The word *nāṭaka* (drama), for example, is used in almost all Indian languages. Telugu is the only language that uses *rūpaka* which is also a Sanskrit word, though originally it included all the ten kinds of drama as defined by Bharata in his celebrated *Nāṭyaśāstra*. This uniformity of terms tends to give the impression that modern Indian dramatic literature is a continuation of the ancient tradition. It may give a farther impression that these terms were in use throughout the history of dramatic activities in India. The history of modern Indian theatre, however, contradicts the impression. Most of these terms were borrowed from Sanskrit into modern Indian languages only when a new dramatic literature started emerging under the impact of the West in the last century. Terms so frequent today, meaning *act*, *scene*, *curtain*, *aside*, *behind the curtain*, *backdrop*, *soliloquy* etc were not used in the medieval period at all. Terms like *aṅka* (act) and *drśya* (scene), common in many Indian languages today, were not used in the medieval theatre, though they are of Sanskritic origin. *Aṅkam* (act) and *kāṭci* (scene/one show), now used in Tamil, emerged only in the 19th century. Similarly, other languages too, began to use them in the sense they are familiar today, only in the last century when plays on the Sanskritic or English model began to appear in various Indian languages. To illustrate this point further, one may consider two terms : *raṅgam* and *raṅgaśṭhalam* now used in Telugu. Both are Sanskrit words meaning 'stage'. In modern Telugu, the former is used for 'scene' and the latter for stage. Neither Sanskrit drama nor the medieval language theatre made any distinction between an act and a scene, but such a distinction became necessary with the emergence of modern drama and *raṅgam* was used to meet that necessity. Even the word *aṅka* which means 'act' in many India languages, did not exclusively mean 'act' in Sanskrit. *Aṅka* (or the longer form *utsṛṣṭikāṅka*) also meant a special type of one-act play in Sanskrit.

With the growth of modern drama in India, the dramatists and producers were exposed to various western dramatic terms. They quickly found equivalents for some in Sanskrit, but for many they had to accept either the English terms with some phonological readjustments or to

of new words. In the process a new set of terms emerged. Some of the terms were coined only to suit the needs of modern dramatic requirements and to differentiate the modern theatrical activities from the ancient and the medieval. The English word *green-room*, for example, is used freely in various Indian languages, and even when a native equivalent is available (for example, Bengali, *sājghar* ; Oriya, *sājaghara* ; Tamil, *Oppanaiarai*, etc.), the English word has a higher frequency. Kannada occasionally uses *baṇṇa da mane* (literally, house of colour), a term almost exclusively used in *Yakṣagāna*. Similarly, most of the modern Indian languages have directly borrowed the word 'rehearsal'. Tamil has created a new word *Ottikai* (practice/repetition). This word has no antecedent in the history of Tamil theatre. Malayalam has a word *abhyāsam* which is nearest to 'rehearsal', but is almost exclusively used in the context of *Kathākali*. These terms, however, do not pose any serious problems as they are more or less exclusive. Problems arise when Sanskrit and European terms are used without any discrimination. The mixing up of words originating in different dramatic traditions tends to cause some confusion. A modern Hindi critic points out that one talks about *avasthā* and *sandhi* in respect of *nāṭakiya vastu*, and of *udghāṭaka*, *saṅgharṣa*, or *caram vindu* (these are Hindi equivalents of 'recognition', 'conflict' and 'climax' respectively in the same breath only to one's peril.<sup>1</sup> This is more or less true of dramatic criticism in all Indian languages. New terms for 'conflict', 'climax' or 'tension' etc have been created, although these conceptions were not closely present in Sanskrit dramaturgy. Tamil *muraṇ* (conflict), *uccam/ucca kaṭṭam* (climax) ; Panjabi *dvand/ṭakkar* (conflict), *tānāo* (tension) are examples of neologism of this kind. Some languages retain the English words in preference to the neologies ; the intention being to indicate the foreign nature of the concepts. Kannada, for example, uses the word *climax*, although a native word *patāke* is available. In some cases new words, mostly of descriptive type, are used to designate foreign dramatic forms. The English word *farce*, for example, is often rendered into Indian languages as *prahasana*. Tamil uses *vilāsa nāṭakam*, Panjabi *masqiri*, while Kannada uses three words, *prahasana*, *hāsyā-prahasana*, and *nage-nāṭakam*. Both *hāsyā* and *nage* mean 'laughter', one of Sanskrit origin, the other native Kannada. Terms compounded with these words indicate the nature of the play, thus extending the meaning of Sanskrit *prahasana*.

Similarly the terms for *curtain* has also acquired new semantic connotations. Sanskrit has the controversial word *yavanikā* (controversy being

that the word might be of Greek origin) as well as *tiraskaraṇi*. Most of the languages in India retain *yavanikā*, though curtain as it is used in modern plays was not known to our ancestors. Terms used for curtain in some languages are *tirai* (Tamil), *tere* (Kannada), *tira* (Malayalam), *tera* (Telugu). The Persian word *pardā* is also used in many languages : *pardā*/*parde* in Panjabi, Hindi, Oriya, Bengali and at times in Kannada. Tamil had a word *eḷini* for curtain, though not used in modern context. The words *tirai*, *tere*, *tira* and *tera* are derived from a common source and they etymologically mean 'wave' or 'veil'. Tamil incidentally also used *tira-śśila* (meaning 'wave-cloth'). In performances, known as *Vidyāpati nāc* in Purnea, Bihar, the play begins with *jaminikā*. It is not clearly known whether this word is related to *yavanikā* or not.<sup>9</sup> In several traditional performances, notably in *Kutiyattam*, *Yakṣagāna*, *Kathākali*, *Aṅkiyā Nāṭ* or *Bhavāi*, a piece of cloth is employed, held by two persons while introducing the characters in the beginning of the play. But there is no curtain as such. The use of curtain is, thus, a modern phenomenon and the words denoting it mean a new thing altogether.

While these terms show unmistakable traces of Western influence either in their morphology or in their semantics, there are a large number of terms of Indian origin which has little to do with the Sanskritic dramatic tradition. Modern Indian drama borrowed several elements from our ancient dramatic tradition but tried to avoid the medieval tradition which continued uninterrupted. The relation between the two is either marginal or accidental. Only recently our dramatists have taken serious interest in these traditions mostly confined among rural mass and traditional performers. Many scholars once thought that these medieval theatres, such as the *Aṅkiyā Nāṭ* of Assam, *Yātrā* of Bengal and Orissa, *Bhavāi* of Gujrat, *Bhāgavatmelā* of Tamil Nadu, *Rāmlilā* of north India, *Tāmāsā* of Maharashtra or *Yakṣagāna* of Karnataka were folk in nature and had little or no connection with the classical Sanskrit theatre. While the folk element is predominant in some, classical element is predominant in others. Modern researches have shown quite convincingly that some of the most popular performances of the medieval period has indeed some strong classical affiliations, and they had developed an elaborate and sophisticated manner of presentation. The classical dramatic traditions did not end suddenly and abruptly, though it got stagnated for a long time. Medieval Indian dramatic traditions, powerful and varied as they were, had developed a set of new terminologies related to various aspects of the theatre

the stage, costume, acting, dancing, music, text, characters and several rituals associated with the dramatic activity. The proper significance of these terms can be understood only in relation to the totality of the components that gave medieval Indian drama its distinctiveness and also in relation to the milieu in which it flourished.

## II

By classical Indian drama we mean the Sanskrit drama, as there is little evidence of a classical Dravidian drama. *Tolkappiyam*, of course, refers to *nāṭakam* and makes a distinction between *nāṭakaveḷekku* (dramatic) and *ulaṭkeveḷekku* (folk performance). Ancient commentators talk about *kuṭṭu* (a combination of music and dance and drama) but no specimen of *kuṭṭu* is found except its reference in the epic *Śilappadikaram* written in the period following the Sangam period (i.e. around 450 A.D.).<sup>8</sup> Zvelebil observes, "it is quite obvious that unlike in the case of Sanskrit, Tamil has not produced any important classical drama at all, or if it had – which I doubt – it has not survived."<sup>4</sup> From inscriptional evidences found during the Chola and the later Pandya period (i.e. 9th and 12th c.) some information about contemporary dramatic activities, particularly about the *Kuttācakkaiyar* has been found.<sup>6</sup> But for all practical purposes the Indian dramatic tradition before the British period has two major components : (a) classical Sanskrit and (b) regional. Although the evidence of a continuous tradition of the second stream is found only from the medieval period (i.e. from the 9th c. onwards) the regional tradition is fairly old, and though confined to specific regions it contained elements many of which were closely related to the classical.

In the classical tradition, *nāṭaka* is only one of the types of dramatic performance (*rūpaka*). It is a play with a renowned plot and a renowned hero. There are several other types of plays : *prakaraṇa*, *aṅka*, *vyāyoga*, *bhāṇa*, *samavvākāra*, *vīthi*, *prahasana*, *ḍima* and *ihāṇṇṇa*, all distinct from one another in choice of theme, or in the number of acts, or in the quality of characters. Among these only the terms *nāṭaka* and *prahasana* were used in the modern languages, the former being a general term for drama and the latter meaning a farce or a play evoking laughter and satire. Many modern plays fulfil the conditions of a *prakaraṇa* (which does not have a royal hero and a traditional [*prakhyāta*] plot, but is distinguished by a hero of a non-royal lineage and an invented [*autpattika*] plot), but this term never gained popularity.

The Sanskrit terms denoting different forms of *rūpaka* give some clue to the evolution of drama. It is possible that *bhāṇa* being an one-act play was the earliest form of play and was followed by *vīthi* which is structurally more complicated. *Bhāṇa*, *vīthi* and *aṅka* all share the features of an one-act and it is possible that they have matured into *prahasana* and *vyāyoga*. *Ihāmṛga* (the hero pursues, *i* hate, a woman as unattainable as a gazelle, *mṛga*, hence the name) is more or less a direct development of *vyāyoga* where men disagree with one another and fight; and *dima* is also a variant of *vyāyoga* (*dima* being conspicuous by major combats, while *vyāyoga* by minor clashes). Unlike Aristotle who wrote about the development of tragedy and comedy, the Indian scholar did not mention the historical evolution of *rūpaka*. But it seems that either *bhāṇa* or *vīthi* can be taken as the beginning of drama, other forms being a logical development from it.<sup>6</sup> Sanskrit dramaturgists, however, recognized different sub-types of drama whose structures were evolved through permutations and combinations of the major ten types, such as *nāṭi|nāṭikā* (a mixture of the plots of *nāṭaka* and *prakaraṇa*) or *taṇṭaka|troṭaka* (where a contrast between the divine and the human characters is pronounced). Later writers talk of various *uparūpakas* (sub-class of *rūpaka*). It is likely that the ancient scholars took notice of popular plays and the necessity of recognizing sub-classes of *rūpakas* emanated from their appreciation of them. The possibility is very strong but cannot be substantiated convincingly.

Classical drama used to be performed on permanent stages, known as *nāṭyagrha*, *nāṭyamaṇḍapa*, *prekṣāgrha* or *prekṣāgāra*, while popular plays used to be performed either on an improvised stage outside the temple or in the open air. No mention is found about the popular theatre in detail in Sanskrit manuals on dramaturgy, but C.B. Gupta suggested that the performance of the common man was usually held in *nāṭyamanḍira*, an improvised stage outside temples. He got support from Damodara Misra's *Mahānāṭaka*, which could be staged in the open air. But this play is of later date and cannot be taken as a serious piece of evidence.<sup>7</sup> Stronger evidences come from the actual performances of popular regional dramatic forms such as the *yakṣagāna* or *aṅkiyānāṭa*, which are performed near a temple, or the *rāmaliḷā* or *bhāvāi*, which are open-air plays. In fact all popular dramatic performances, except the *kuṭṭiyāṭṭam*, are performed in an open auditorium and on an improvised stage. Apart from the stage, the popular theatre differs radically from the classical in its manner



of presentation. The popular theatre has been often described as a "total theatre" where music and dance and costumes and words are woven together to present one whole. The primary importance in a Sanskrit drama is given to a written text which is presented through *abhinaya* (acting) without resorting to dance and music as devices of narration or presentation. Some scholars, however, think that the popular theatre evolved out of a classical tradition. Mathur and Ojha in their well-documented introduction to the *Prācīn Bhāṣā Nāṭaka* (1972), a collection of plays supposed to be written between the 14th and 17th centuries in Assam, Orissa, Mithila and Nepal, suggest possible links between these plays and a stage-form, *saṅgītaka*, prevalent during the heydays of Sanskrit drama. This term occurs in *Ubhāyabhisārikā* (a *bhāṇa* by Vararuci) and also in Vidyāpati's *Goraṅgavijay Nāṭaka*. According to these scholars, Kuṭāśekhara Varman (10th c.) in his play *Subhadrā Dhanañjaya* and *Tapatī Samvaran* adopted this technique which later came to be known as *kuṭiyatṭam*. To many of us, however, this appears as a very simplified picture of a complex situation. But there is little doubt about the relationship between the popular theatre and the classical as evident from their structures. The variants of *pūrvaraṅga*, for example, are almost an integral part of some of the major popular theatres of the medieval period. The stronger possibility is that of the popular theatre exercising influences on the classical. It is not at all impossible that the forms such as *saṅgītaka* evolved out of the popular theatre, Sanskritization of popular themes and forms being a significant trend in Indian literary history and performing arts. One can even dare conjecturing that Sanskrit plays actually represent a stage of evolution of the popular plays, the earliest forms of which are completely lost. The popular plays even in their present form still retain some features of their original structure though it is difficult to identify these features as exclusive property of the popular plays. The classical play must have interacted with the popular and borrowed certain elements from it, but it developed its own rigours and structural peculiarities. The plot construction, the principles and various parts of plots (*itivyṛtta*) and devices such as *sandhi* (juncture), *avasthā* (stage of action), and *arthaprakṛti* (objects of plot) and the minute sequential divisions of plot, such as the five divisions of *sandhi* into *mukha* (beginning), *pratimukha* (progression), *garbha* (development), *vimarśa* (deliberation/pause) and *nirvahaṇa* (conclusion), make Sanskrit plays a class by themselves. Byrski shows how Sanskrit drama is conditioned by the Brahmanical view of life and death : since the world

order ultimately tends to happiness' and peace, drama must portray the hero usually attaining his object. He also attempts to show the relation between *yajña* and the dramatic structure and how *nāṭya* presents all the characteristic features of a sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> Even when one disagrees with Byrski, the fact remains that the ancient drama critics viewed the Sanskrit play as a highly structured ritual-based performance as evidenced by the minute description of the five stages of *avasthā* : *prārambha* (beginning), *prayatna* (effort), *prāpti-sambhava* (possibilities of attainment), *niyata-phala-prāpti* (certainty of attainment), *phala-yoga* (attainment of object); and the five means of *arthaprakṛti* : *bīja* (seed), *bindu* (vital drop), *patākā* (episode), *prakarī* (episodical incident) and *kārya* (action). The difference between classical and the popular drama appears to be very wide indeed.

It is more realistic to assume that the popular theatre had an independent origin either from solo-dance, or from solo-narration and solo-acting, and only at a later stage did it accept some of the elements of classical drama. At this point one is tempted to draw a parallel with the origin of the Greek theatre. The common theory of origin of a tragedy, for example, suggests that improvisational songs and dances performed by a group of men in honour of Dionysus became quasi-literary and took on a dramatic element with one dramatic narrator. Aeschylus introduced a second actor and Sophocles a third, and thus Greek tragedies matured into full shape. In case of the medieval Indian theatre conjectures can be made that certain dance forms slowly developed towards a dramatic form with the introduction of one or more characters — in some cases one-narrator performances developed into many-actor performances. We still have the tradition of one-narrator performances, such as *Harikathā* or *Kathakatā*. It is possible, however, that drama had an independent development, as many scholars think that tragedy is not necessarily a child of satyr play but that the two are separated in their origin. But analyzing the structures of various traditional-regional theatrical performances one finds that there are components in them which could have accumulated through time. The Malayalam forms indicate some of the possible stages of the development.

The term *prabandha kuthu*, for example, means 'a narrator of a *prabandha*'; while *cākkīyār kuthu* consists of one man who is essentially a 'jester'. It is possible that *kutṭiyattam*, which is a highly stylized theatre consisting of dance-music-acting, is a development from such one-narrator performances. Tamil terms are even more evocative. The word *kuttu* has been used in the history of Tamil literature to mean 'theatre'. *Kuttu* is

of two kinds : (1) *cantikkuttu* (sophisticated theatre) and (2) *vinodakkuttu* (popular theatre). The presentation of these forms are also known as *teci* (which presents the story of the life of the higher strata in society) and *markkam* (which presents the story of the people belonging to the lower strata). *Cantikkuttu* includes four varieties of performances which, I think, indicate stages of possible development of drama from dance. They are *cokkam* (this is pure dance consisting of 108 postures), *meykkuttu* (this is also pure dance), *abhinayakkuttu* (exposition of a theme through dance) and *nāṭakam* (dance with a story). While *cantikkuttu* was born and nurtured in great temples like Pragadeswara in Tanjore, *vinodakkuttu* developed among the people, and *terukkuttus* (street plays) such as *kuravañci*, *pallu* and *nonṭi-nāṭakam* were born out of it.<sup>9</sup>

The other possibility is that the one-narrator performances developed into a stage where two actors participated. There are several forms of performances in India where the participation is restricted to two actors only. Some of them did not develop into a full-fledged dramatic form, e.g. *kavigān* in Bengal, but some did, e.g. *gondhal* and *lāvani* in Maharashtra. In all probability *lāvani*, if not *gondhal*, contributed to the growth of a popular play like *tāmāsā*.

However, I do not want to insist upon this question too strongly as the question whether the popular plays were developed out of the classical tradition or whether they got stylized in course of time and grafted materials from the classical plays, cannot be answered satisfactorily. But there are plays which display a strong affinity with the classical tradition. *Kuṭiyaṭṭam*, a popular theatre in Malayalam, provides the first example. The earliest form of *kuthu* (kutu) – the common name for all theatrical performances in Kerala – is *cākkiyar kuthu*, a temple play, performed exclusively by the community known as *cākkiyar*. The themes of these plays are taken invariably from Sanskrit drama and they are performed by those persons, the *cākkiyar*, who acts as well as dances, the *nambiār* who plays on a drum known as *mizhāvu*, and the *naṅgyār*, wife of a *cākkiyar*, who sings and maintains the rhythm.<sup>10</sup> *Kuṭiyaṭṭam*, as I have said earlier, is a gradual development of the *cākkiyar kuthu*.

*Kuṭiyaṭṭam*<sup>11</sup> is played on a stage known as *kūṭṭambalam* (literally, temple-stage), *ambalam* being the Dravidian word for the stage.<sup>12</sup> This stage is usually of a rectangular structure, though it can also be oval. The *kūṭṭambalam* consists of *uepathya* and the auditorium. *Kuṭiyaṭṭam* takes several nights to perform. It has certain preliminary rituals, known as

*totayam* (obeissance to gods) done behind the stage. Then the *nambīār* beats the *mizhāvu* and the *naṅgyar* sings the *akkiṭṭa kuṭṭuha* (benedictory songs). After that the *nambīār* gives a summary of the story to be enacted; followed by *arannu tali* (cleansing of the stage by sprinkling of water). It is followed by *maṅgalaśloka* and songs by the *naṅgyar* and then enter the main characters. Two persons hold a curtain and the actors remain hidden behind it. This feature is common to both *kuṭiyattam* as well as *kathākali*. Then the actors, after the curtain is removed, take up the interpretation of the first three lines of the first verse of the play. The first day's performance ends with various *abhinayas* (gestures) which are of four types : *hastābhinaya* (hand gestures), *mukhābhinaya* (facial gestures), *netrābhinaya* (expressions of eyes) and *vācikābhinaya* (expression through language). All this, including the construction of the stage and the preliminary rituals, shows how sophisticated and stylized this performance is, and the affinities it has with the performance of classical dance.

The second phase of the play is known as *nirvāhaṇa*, which is also more or less ritualistic but of a greater performance value. The main character enters and introduces himself, i.e., he narrates the earlier phases of the myth to be enacted. The *naṅgyar* recites verses, the actor dances or mimes. This may continue for several nights. Then enters the jester and the play begins. The play ends with a benediction. The whole performance thus has neatly defined sequences : the invocation, the *nirvāhaṇa* of the character, *nirvāhaṇa* of the jester (*vidūṣaka*), the enactment of the story and the final benediction. Being temple theatre *kuṭiyattam* retains many elements of the Sanskrit theatre and "it is an amalgam of many traditions," as Kapila Vatsayan points out, "some strictly śāstrīya and universally Indian, others totally local or regional and contemporary." Even it had its origin in a non-classical tradition since the 12th century, and beginning with the manuals like *Aṭṭaparakāśam* and *Kramadīpikā*, a substantial literature grew which helped the codification and stylization of this performance. *Kuṭiyattam* developed into the most sophisticated of all regional dramatic performances, evolving its own elaborate terminology of stage-craft and acting styles.

### III

The first extant play in Kannada, *Mitravinda Govinda* (1680), was an adaptation of Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī* by Narayanasingayya, a poet in the court of King Chikka Devaraja of Mysore (1672-1704). We also find references to

the existence of a theatre, known as *nāṭakaśāle*. It appears that a dramatic tradition in Karnataka flourished under royal patronage and in all probability it followed the Sanskrit dramatic tradition.<sup>13</sup> The word *nāṭaka*, however, is tricky and cannot be always taken as a synonym for *drama*. It could mean, and most probably meant, *dance* with a predominance of *abhinaya* in medieval Karnataka.<sup>14</sup> The description of a character in a *nāṭaka* mentioned in the *Bāsava Purāṇa* (? 1369) agrees with the costumes of a dance. Pampa has also used the word *nāṭaka* in the sense of dance. Scholars have suggested that the dance with some elements of mime, in the royal court was known as *nāṭaka*, distinguished from the folk form known as *āṭa*. This only suggests a strong link between dance and drama in the medieval period and also the possibility of the evolution of drama out of dance. E. Gordon Craig's assertion that "the Art of the Theatre has sprung from action-movement-dance"<sup>15</sup> finds enough support from medieval Indian drama.

Whatever be the forms of these plays, they were confined among the elite and were closer to their Sanskritic models. But there was another tradition. Nṛpatuṅga, the author of *Kavirājamārga* (9th c.) mentions several literary forms unknown to Sanskrit poetics, such as *nālpagaraṇa*<sup>16</sup>, which are believed to be of native origin (*deśya*). The royal courts used to invite folk troupes to stage shows and maybe that was a point of contact between the folk and classical drama. Some of these folk forms borrowed features from the elite theatre and in course of time attained greater respectability. We know that the *yakṣagāna* attained a great popularity in the 18th century. But Govinda Diksita in his *Saṅgīta sudhe* (1628) mentions it as a special kind of music. Govinda Vaidya, the court poet of Kanṭhīravā Narasarāja, also refers to *Daśāvatāra da āṭa* (a kind of *yakṣagāna* illustrating the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu). Even Kumār Vyāsa refers to *nāḍāḍigaḷa nāṭaka* (drama of the people) in his *Mahābhārata*. These references indicate that the *yakṣagāna* existed as a folk form of entertainment long before the 18th century.<sup>17</sup>

The word *yakṣagāna* is composed of *yakṣa* (a mythological celestial creature) and *gāna* (music). According to a certain tradition Kubera, the lord of the yakṣas, fled to the Himalayas from the South, and the *yakṣagāna* is therefore of Southern origin. Some scholars try to derive the word from *jakkala* (or *yakkala*) *gāna* (meaning 'southern music') and cite a parallel form, *jakkala śilpa* (the southern style of sculpture). All this, however, shows unmistakably its obscure folk origin, though later it

acquired some features of the pan-Indian theatre. Like *kuṭiyattam*, it is also a religious play. It is also known as *bhāgavatara āṭa* because a 'bhāgavata' is the leader of the performers, and perhaps because of the themes generally deriving from the *Bhagavatam*. It is also known as *daśavatārada āṭa* and also as *meladavara āṭa* (blending of various arts).<sup>18</sup>

Unlike *kuṭiyattam*, the *yakṣagāna* is an open-air performance.<sup>19</sup> The audience sits on the three sides of an improvised stage, known as *raṅga-sthala*. But there are several points of similarity in their structure. Ganeśa is worshipped in the green room (*nepathya*). In both cases preliminaries are performed, *purappadu* in *kuṭiyattam*; *sabhā lakṣaṇa* in the *yakṣagāna*. *Nirvāhaṇa* is the introduction of characters in the former and the corresponding feature is *oḍḍolaga* (the entrance of characters) in the latter. In both there is a clown, *vidūṣaka* in *kuṭiyattam*, *hāsyāgāra* or *koḷāṅgi* in *yakṣagāna*. In both one notices the vestiges of the tradition of *pūrvaraṅga* and of *sūtradhāra* of the Sanskrit plays. Further classical influence is best seen in the music and dance-components of these plays, and their stylization is best evidenced in the costumes and make-ups.<sup>20</sup>

*Kuṭiyattam* and *yakṣagāna* can be compared with *bhāgavatamelā* of Tamilnadu. Like the former, but unlike the latter, *bhāgavatamelā* is performed in front of a temple, and like both, the ritualistic formalities are observed in the green room, adjacent to the auditorium. The performance begins with the entrance of a clown, known as *koṇāṅgi* who dances and speaks in prose. Then follows *thodaya maṅgala* (invocation), a feature shared by *kathākali*, which is a purely musical composition. This shows that this feature might have been accompanied with dance in the earlier tradition but was later changed. Soon after the invocation enters a young boy with a mask of Ganeś. A similar feature occurs in the *yakṣagāna* too, but only in the green room. Then the main characters enter (the sequence is known as *pātrapraveśa*, equivalent to *oḍḍolaga* of *yakṣagāna*) and start singing and dancing. The choreography is more sophisticated than that of the *yakṣagāna*, and much closer to *bharatanāṭyam*. The most distinctive feature of *bhāgavatmelā* is its costumes, which are realistic as well as contemporary. Kapila Vatsyayana points out, "here then is an anachronism which is built into the dramatic form. Although the themes are puranic and in one sense timeless, the costumes are distinctively period costumes. The young boy who plays the role of women, *strīveśa*, dresses much in the style of the *Bharatanāṭyam* dances, although some appear in *Saris* as worn in everyday life."<sup>21</sup>

*Kucipudi* (or *brāhmaṇa bhāgavatālu*), a theatrical form of Andhra Pradesh, on the other hand, begins with Ganeś vandanā, but the *vidūṣaka* is absent here. The tradition of *sūtradhāra* is maintained in the form of a *bhāgavatār*. The performance is dominated by *nṛtta* (dance), but the costume, though more gorgeous, is more or less similar to that of *bhāgavatamelā*. All these performances – *kuṭiyaṭṭam*, *yakṣagāna*, *bhāgavatamelā* and *kucipudi* – though distinct from one another, share some important features all of which indicate their affinities with both classical Sanskrit tradition and popular mass performance. We do not know whether this is a coincidence but all these forms flourished in South India. Is it because of an interaction between the classical dance and popular theatre? Is it because of some attempts to Sanskritize the popular narrative – recitation – mimetic traditions? We do not know. But we find several other performances which existed side by side and remained unaffected by the attempts of Sanskritization. The musical dance-dramas such as *kuravañci paḷḷu* or *nonṭināṭakam* are examples of such unaffected popular performances. Even their names indicate their humble origin. *Kuravañci*, which means a ‘hill-tribe’, tells the story of a woman falling in love with a deity, whom she saw in a procession. Unaware of the woman’s sentiments, the lord left the place, leaving the love-sick woman in great mental agony. At this point, a *kuratti*, a hill-born tribal girl, skilled in the art of palmistry, enters into the story, and assures the woman of her union with the deity. The episode of the woman in love with a god ends here and the story of the *kuratti* begins. The husband of the *kuratti*, who is a hunter, comes on the stage looking for his wife. Their union precedes long sequences of incidents and earthy dialogues entertaining the audience.

The word *pāḷḷu* comes from *paḷḷan* meaning ‘tillers’ and the plays known by this word are deeply rooted in rural life and manners. Although the presiding deity of a temple always figures in this play, the real hero is a *paḷḷan*, a low-caste agricultural labourer working in the land of the temple under the order of the *pannaikkāran* (the manager of the estate). The *paḷḷan* has two wives, one a *saivite* and the other a *vaishnava*. He neglects the former and so infatuated is he with the latter that he starts avoiding his work in the land. The older wife complains to the manager who puts him in fetters. Finally, however, he is released through the intervention of the same woman. After a sharp and to some extent hilarious exchange of words between the two wives, both of them realize that the difference between Saivism and Vaishnavism is superficial. The play

brings out the pathos of the life of the tillers of soil as well as the suffering and exploitation they face in their daily life.

*Nonṭināṭakam* (nonṭi=cripple) meaning 'cripple play' is a monologue of a lame person, characterized by satire and mordant humour and raciness of the spoken language. These forms of dramatic performances, as well as the street play of Andhra Pradesh, *vīthi*, remained confined to the masses and did not receive patronage either from the royalty or the priestly authority. As a result they did not acquire the sophistication of the dance-dramas we have mentioned above.

It was not necessarily royal patronage that helped the folk plays acquire sophistication, but the patronage of stable religious groups often acted as a controlling factor in the codification and stylization of folk plays. *Aṅkiyānāṭa* of Assam<sup>22</sup> is a fine example to prove this point. Although the term *aṅkiyānāṭa* or *bhāonā* was not used by Sankaradev, the pioneer of this type of play, it became popular in the later period. He wrote twelve plays and called them *yātrā*, *nāṭaka* and occasionally, *nāṭa*. The popular explanation of the later term is that it has been derived from *aṅka* (act) and they are called *aṅkiyā* as they are one-act plays. Goswami quoted from the *Santāvalī*, the authoritative text of the Assamese vaishnavas, which says that the name comes from the word *aṅkita* (painted/decorated).<sup>23</sup> Sankaradev, the great vaishnava saint-poet, created a religious institution, *sattrā* which consisted of a *nāmaghara* (literally, house of names), *maṇikūṭa* or *stambhāsana* (the place where the Bhāgavata is placed) and *hāṭi* where the initiates could live. The *nāmaghara* i.e. the prayer hall, was also the place for theatrical performance. The stage for *aṅkiyānāṭa* is known as *rabhā* or *sabhāghar*. Costumes are kept in *co-ghara* (i.e. green room) in one part of the *nāmaghara*.

The themes of *aṅkiyānāṭa* are taken from the Purāṇas, the language is Brajabuli (i.e. a hybrid language consisting of Maithili and Assamese words), and their structure modelled on Sanskrit.<sup>24</sup> There are various preliminaries before the actual performance, including the singing of *kīrtan* which often continues throughout the day. The most important thing is, of course, the installation of the Bhāgavata on an altar. This act is known as *thāpanā*. Other features of preliminaries are very similar to the *pūrvaraṅga* of Sanskrit plays. In fact modern scholars of *aṅkiyānāṭa* describe the actions as *pūrvaraṅga* and divide them into two major groups: *vahitryavanikā* (actions to be performed by the action on the stage) and *antaryavanikā* (actions to be performed by the members of



the orchestra). The former has ten distinct constituents and the latter nine. *Vahiryavanikā* indicates the stages of the *purvaraṅga* beginning with the invocation and ending with a speech of the Sūtradhāra announcing the start of the actual performance. After the invocations, songs set in particular rāgas are sung and verses on specified religious moods are recited, followed by the entrance of a masked character, similar to a clown, and finally of the Sūtradhāra. On both these occasions they enter behind a white screen (*ār kapor*) held by two men, which is taken away once they take their positions. The Sūtradhāra sings a *nāndī* (a song set in a particular rāga) and then announces the subject matter of the play to be enacted. The Sūtradhāra sings a religious song, known as the *bhāṭīna*<sup>25</sup> and then introduces the hero who also enters under the cover of the *ār kapor*.<sup>26</sup>

Scholars have found many similarities between the *aṅkiyānāṭa* and the tradition of Sanskrit plays. Yet it is quite possible that the *aṅkiyānāṭa* did not develop directly from the classical tradition, but that it grew out of a folk tradition which slowly acquired several features of the great tradition under the patronage of a religious group which tried to make a synthesis between the regional and the pan-Indian religious traditions. The use of the local language along with Brajabuli and occasionally Sanskrit, the employment of masks and effigies (*cho*),<sup>27</sup> the manner of employment of the singers and musicians, and also the presence of several rituals indicate the interaction between the Sanskritic and the popular tradition. This is further noticed in the music and dance and costumes as well as in the terminologies used in the dramaturgy of the *aṅkiyānāṭa*.

#### IV

There were some types of medieval theatre that centred around the theme of *līlā* (divine sport) such as *rāmlīlā*, *kṛṣṇalīlā* and *rāsalīlā*, based on two themes, one belonging to Rām, the hero of the Rāmāyaṇa, and the other belonging to Krishna. Both these characters, as they appear in these plays, are essentially creations of medieval India, although both of them also belong to earlier traditions, Rām to the Rāmāyaṇa and Krishna to the Mahābhārata. The Rām of the medieval period as conceived by Tulsidas and several other poets in different parts of the country, is radically different from the Rāma of the Sanskrit epic. Similarly the Krishna of medieval India has slender connections with the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā. The performances centring around them also have several stages of growth. H.H.

Wilson and Sylvain Lévi described *rāmlilā* as mere spectacles.<sup>28</sup> According to some scholars the pantomime might have been the original form of *rāmlilā*. S.M. Tagore thought that it originated first in the form of pantomime known as *jhāṅki*,<sup>29</sup> which in the words of Norvin Hein, “do not enact any narrative. The situation presented is always the same, Sītā and Rām enthroned, holding, as it were, their durbar.”<sup>30</sup> The origin of *jhāṅki* is obscure but it is possible that it preceded Tulsidas. That *rāmlilā* in its essential features was known to Tulsidas is evidenced by *Rāmcaritmānas* itself. In the *Uttarakāṇḍ*, the kāk bhuṣaṇḍī while narrating the childhood activities of his previous birth mentions that he “used to perform all the *līlās* of Raghunāyak i.e. Rām” (*karaū sakal raghunāyak līlā*).<sup>31</sup> Guru Nanak’s *asā dī vār* also refers to both *rāmlilā* and *kṛṣṇalīlā*; and the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* of Krishnadas Kaviraj also refers to the Rāmāyaṇa plays performed at Puri (*Madhyakāṇḍa*, xv). It is possible, therefore, to conjecture that the Rām plays existed in some form or other among the masses and were known to Tulsidas, who was probably instrumental to giving it a new turn and the form by which it is known today. Kapila Vatsyayan in her book *Traditional Indian Theatre* has given a lucid account of the many forms of *rāmlilā* throughout India, beginning with the simplest form *kathā*, which is straight forward recitation by a story-teller, the shadow theatre, puppet dances and the theatre proper. The way *rāmlilā* is performed today shows an unmistakable folk origin totally unimpaired by the rigidities of classical theatre. It is part of a folk ritual, evolved and sustained by the people at large, and a continuation of the medieval religio-artistic tradition. In Uttar Pradesh, the text of the play is based on the Tulsi Rāmāyaṇa, the place is always open-air, the stage a raised platform and the duration is often to fifteen days. The *sūtradhāra* tradition is maintained here, though the narrator is called *vyāsa*. It is also a combination of recitation, declamation and songs and spectacles provided by battle-scenes.

*Rāsalīlā* too might be of very early origin, earlier than the *bhāgavata* which describes a dance and a festival of that name, and in all probability took its present shape during the 15th and 16th centuries when the vaishnava movement was strongest in North India. *Rāsalīlā*, being an aspect of Krishna’s life, is a part of the *kṛṣṇalīlā* in the broader sense. It is, however, performed on a special stage, a circular one, as it represents the *rāsamaṇḍala* of the Bhāgavata. As this stage has two levels — one platform known as the *raṅgamaṇḍala* and the other the upstage where a throne

is kept—Vatsyayan thinks that they “clearly recall the division of the Sanskrit stage into the *raṅgapīṭha* and the *raṅgaśīrṣa*.”<sup>32</sup>

Some scholars have divided the performance into two distinct parts—*rāsa* and *līlā*, and some into three (*saṅgītaka* being the middle part). The spectacle begins with a tableau (*jhāṅki*) behind a curtain. When the curtain is removed Rādhā and Krishna, sitting on a throne, come to the full view of the audience. The director of the performance (*svāmī*) makes obeisance to them and the *maṅgalācaraṇ* (invocation) is sung, which is followed by other songs and *ārati*. On the completion of the ritual, Rādhā and Krishna, being requested by the gopīs, join the *rāsa* dances. At the end of the dance the divine pair go upstage and sit on their throne. This symbolizes the coming of God to the earth for sport and His final return to His heavenly abode. The *svāmī* appears on the stage and the audience joins him in offering its salutation to God.

In the *līlā* plays of other types i.e. those centring round some episode from Krishna’s life, the *svāmī* plays the role of a narrator. Not only are there occasional dialogues but also mimes of various actions. It is now well nigh impossible to know the exact nature of the performance and of the texts of *kṛṣṇalīlā*. A text like *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan* (supposed to be written by Baḍu Caṇḍīdās in Bengali in the 15th century) provides some clues. This is a long poem consisting of songs (the *rāgas* and *tālas* are mentioned for each one of them) and dialogues, some very natural and realistic, and narrative verses, and also Sanskrit verses connecting different episodes. It has three actors : Krishna, Rādhā and Baḍāi (an old woman).<sup>33</sup>

Whatever might be the antiquity of the *līlā* plays, they were firmly established during the *bhakti* movement. Most probably the *jātrā* (yātrā), the popular play of Bengal and Orissa, began to emerge, if not mature, during that period. Like the *līlā* plays, the *jātrā*, too, was connected with certain rituals and religious occasions. The word *jātrā* (yātrā) occurs in ancient texts, though not in the same sense as it is used today, and it might give some clue to its origin. Bharata uses this term to denote a popular performance and Bhavabhūti in his *Mālatīmādhava* in the sense of festival.<sup>34</sup> *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* mentions terms like *rāsayātrā*, *dīpāvalī yātrā*, *dvādaśī yātrā* (II, 8) as well as *kṛṣṇayātrā* and *rāsalīlā* (II, 15, 16). It is difficult to know whether a distinction between the term *līlā* and *yātrā* was maintained or not, or whether the terms coalesced in Bengali. There is no doubt that the *yātrā* got an impetus from Chaitanya, who was an actor of

some reputation. He played a role in a *kṛṣṇayātrā* (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, II, 15) as well as in a play based on a theme from the Rāmāyaṇa, where he acted the role of Hanumān.<sup>85</sup> One of the interesting terms used in this period is *kāc* which meant 'make-up' or 'disguise'. Later this word also meant 'entertainment' or 'joke'.

We do not know whether the *yātrā* is related to the *lilā* plays or whether it is of an independent origin. Orissa had *yātrā* in addition to the *dāskāṭhiyā*, *caḍheyānāca*, *daṇḍanāca* and *suaṅga* etc — all distinctly folk in character — but no one has demonstrated any relation between these folk entertainments and the *yātrā*. The *dāsakāṭhiyā*, the simplest of all these performances, consists of two persons, a singer (*gāyaka*) and an assistant, known as *pāḷiyā*, who parodies the songs sung by the *gāyaka*. The *caḍheyānāca* also consists of two actor-singers, one male and the other female. The *daṇḍanāca* is structurally similar to the *caḍheyānāca*, its participants being a man and a woman, but the characters act sitting on a wooden horse and the performance is held in the outer courtyard (*daṇḍa* means the front courtyard) only on the last day of Caitra (Mid-April). The *yātrā* might have evolved from such structurally simple performances and developed into an open-air theatre with a written text and of larger participants.

Quite interestingly the *yātrā* is known as *samāja* in Cuttack and Puri. This word has been used in the *Jātakas* as well as in the *Kāmasūtra* in the sense of a dramatic performance.<sup>86</sup> We know from the *Jātakas* that a mobile group of *naṭa* (actor) used to perform plays and the stage used by them was called *samāja-maṇḍala*. In the first rock edict of Ashoka the word *samāja* occurs : *pajuhitovyam na ca samājo katavya bahukam hi dosaṃ samājamhi pasati devāṇaṃ piyo piyādasi rājā. asti 'p tu ekacā samājā sādhumatā devāṇam*.<sup>87</sup> In the second sentence the word *samāja* has been used in the sense of 'social parties'. In *Arthaśāstra* also the *yātrā* and *samāja* have been used in the sense of festivals and social meetings. That the word is still used in Oriya in this very sense shows very clearly the connections between the *yātrā* and *samāja*, and indicates the possibility that the *yātrā* is actually a very old form of entertainment.

The wide distribution of the term *yātrā* (*jātrā*) in Bengal, Orissa, Assam and Manipur (the Gujarati *bhavāi* is also often mentioned as *yātrā*, e.g. in the opening *veśa* it is proclaimed, *cācarmā jātar bhālī*, which means, 'to play a *yātrā* i.e. *bhavāi* in *cācar* i.e. the courtyard of a temple, is good') and its various configurations lead one to conjecture that this dramatic form was quite old and popular, and most probably the *lilā* plays were

derived from it. Almost every region in India had typical theatres of their own, to which various other traditions of music and dance and modes of narration contributed. In the course of evolution some of them became more stylized than the others, some grafted more elements of the Sanskrit theatre, and some remained comparatively flexible and less stylized. The *aṅkiyānāṭa* is an example of the first group, while the *yātrā* is one of the second group. *Rāmlīlā* and *rāsalīlā* stand between the two. But in the widest sense they all form a set. It is not without significance that in the Manipuri language *jātrā* and *līlā* are almost synonymous for any open-air traditional play.

## V

There are several legends about the origin of the Gujarati *bhavāi*. There was a priest at Siddhapur who was excommunicated because he rescued a kaṇabi girl kidnapped by a muslim general. His descendants, known as Bhāvāyās, form a sizable community in Gujarat, now divided into various sub-groups. They earn their living by performing the *bhavāi*, throughout the year except during the rains. According to another version of the legend, the father of the rescued girl, one Hemala Patel, gave a piece of land and three houses to the excommunicated priest in Urjha, a place near Siddhapur. Since that time that priest's family came to be known as *trangharwale* (the three house-holders) and their caste, *taragale*. The descendants of that priest were divided into two communities, *nāyak* and *bhojak*. There is yet another legend, prevalent in Rajasthan, which says that Nagaji, an excommunicated Jath, was given two musical instruments, *nagāra* and *bhuṅgal*, and was asked to perform the *bhavāi*. The Rajput actors of *bhavāi* claim their descentance from Nagaji. These legends indicate that the actors of *bhavāi* were not members of the higher caste, and in the words of Jhaveri, "each troupe had a hereditary right to play in a particular locality and beg of a particular caste",<sup>89</sup> and also that they were wandering performers like the actors of *yātrā*.

Whatever be its origin, the *bhavāi* became a part of the festivals of higher castes in the course of time. It is neither stylized like the *aṅkiyānāṭa*, nor is it exclusively devoted to a particular theme, such as the *rāmlīlā*. It enjoys freedom in respect of text, dress and make-up as well as in choice of location. It can be performed anywhere, a road, an inn or near a temple. A tattered piece of cloth or an old carpet serves for a curtain. With the passage of time, however, it has acquired some ritualistic elements. For

example, during the performance a *garabī* (an earthen jar), representing the goddess Ambā (Mother) is kept on the stage, or a *triśula* (a trident) and a lamp are kept in the green-room. The play begins with a salutation to the *garabī* and a prayer to Mother.

The director of the play is known as *nāyaka* (leader), whose functions are similar to those of the *adhikārī* of *yātrā*. The musicians, again as in the *yātrā*, sit on one side of the *paudh* (acting zone) and the audience on all sides. After the salutation song, enter the actors and the singers sing *āvanī/āvanī* (probably from the Sanskrit *āgamana*) meaning 'entry'. The *bhavāī* differs from other types of plays not so much in its manner of presentation as in the matter it presents. The themes are mythological, but the emphasis is pronouncedly on social issues. The dramatic part of *bhavāī* is called *veśa*, a term prevalent in Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra, the difference being that while it means different characters distinguished by their make-up in these areas, in the *bhavāī* it means 'themes'. Several *veśas* are presented in one performance, most of them social, and the social content is injected mostly by one actor, a clown, known as *raṅglo*. Female roles, performed by men, are often distinguished by special dances. Dahyabhai Derasari finds some of the dances very similar to Egyptian dances, often "full of obscene suggestions", and their movements generally coarse and unseemly. Vastsayan, however, sees in them fine footwork and rhythmic patterns comparable to some of the established dances. The music used in *bhavāī* also bears affinity with the classical Hindustani music. In costumes, it differs from many other plays, as the characters are dressed in contemporary clothes, often anachronistic in nature.

The *bhavāī*, as it is performed today, at least those performed by the actors belonging to a higher caste, is certainly more sophisticated than what it originally was. The traditional *bhavāī* is still a street play and its affinity with the *vīthī* of Andhra Pradesh is very clear indeed.

Along with the *bhavāī*, *vīthī* and *yātrā*, one must add *swāṅg*, *naṭankī* and *tāmāśā* to the category of open-air plays. The origin of these plays also goes back in all probability to solo-acting, solo recitation or a combination of both. Details about most of these forms are not to be found in written texts before the emergence of British power in India. That does not mean, however, that they are of a recent origin. Some of them were parts of folk rituals, unnoticed and uncared for by the elite, but some were known in the medieval period. The *swāṅg* for example is mentioned by Jaiṇ and Kabir refers to both *swāṅg* and *tāmāśā*.<sup>40</sup> Some scholars have tried to

derive the term *swaṅg* from the Sanskrit *saṅgīta* and *saṅgītaka* to prove its Sanskritic affiliation. But looking at the different variants of this word – Panjabi *sauang*, *sāṅg* (which means mimicry), Kumayuni *swang* (buffoon), Nepali *swān* (humorous) along with the forms in Hindi, Gujarati and Bengali (see R.L. Turner, *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*, London 1969) – its relation with *saṅgītaka* cannot be established. Turner derives the word from *samāṅga*, which can mean ‘equal body’ i.e. faithful imitation. One can compare the word with the expression in the following line in the Guru Granth Sahib (Kān, Mahalla 5) – *anek swaṅg kāche bhekdhāri* (the *bhekdhāri* puts on various enactments). Even expressions like *sāṅg utārnā* (to imitate), *sāṅg lahuṇā* (to re-enact) in modern Panjabi also suggest that the meaning of this word is ‘to act’. Moreover, if one analyzes the features of the Hindi *swāṅg*, Bengali *saṅg* and Oriya *suaṅg*<sup>41</sup>, it becomes difficult to establish any direct connection between them and the classical tradition. Similarly the *khyāla* prevalent in Rajasthan and in some parts of Uttar Pradesh, or the *māca/manch* of Madhya Pradesh as well as the *naufaṅki* (some scholars derive the word from the Sanskrit *nāṭaka*)<sup>42</sup> are folk plays, though many of them have grafted some Sanskritic elements. The *tāmāśā*, too, is a folk play and is often characterized by vulgarity. The word *tāmāśā* means ‘fun’ and its aim is to entertain the common men. It has no connection with temples, is completely free from all rituals and can be, indeed is, performed in streets. The play begins with two persons, one plays on a *ḍholak*, and the other on a *halgi*, a tambourine type of instrument. They are joined by *manjīrā* players and *tuntune* players. After that the lead musician enters and sings an invocation to Ganeśa. The composition is known as *gān* and the whole sequence as *āvāhana*. Along with the principal singer, known as the *sūtradhāra*, another character, a clown, known as *soṅgāḍya*, also enters the stage at the same time.

The *tāmāśā* has three distinctive parts : (1) *gān*, which is a song praising the lord Ganeśa, (2) *gavḷā* (Skt *gopavālā*) which is in the main a dance sequence, and (3) *vog*, a story or generally ‘a comic story.’ The *gavḷā/gavḷāṇī* was originally religious in spirit but is now more or less a doggerel and a comical episode between a milkmaid and the *sūtradhāra* and more often with the *soṅgāḍya*, which pretends to be Krishna. The *tāmāśā*, therefore, is in certain parts comparable to the Bengali *krishnayātrā*. The dialogue between the milkmaid and the clown which is known as *jhaḡḍā* or *sawal-jabāb*, resembles the features of the *bādīpādā* of Orissa and the *kabīr laḍāī*

of Bengal. Finally comes the real story, a straight-forward farce, or *raṅgabāji*. The form itself is very colloquial and the mood reflected is jovial. The costumes of the *tāmāśā* actors, like those of the *bhavālī*, are simple and contemporary.

## VI

Kapila Vatsayan has argued convincingly that a clear-cut dichotomy between elite and folk performances is not possible for the simple reason that we find not only a continuity of the Sanskrit tradition in various medieval performances, but a tendency towards Sanskritization in them resulting in the acceptance of many features of temple performances as well as of classical Sanskrit drama. She points out that, "however unmistakably regional or local its separate constituents may be, they belong to a whole which is equally unmistakably Indian in form and substance."<sup>43</sup> But this does not necessarily mean that one should overlook the continuous interactions (not necessarily conflict) between the great and little traditions in drama as well as in poetry. There are a large number of dramatic forms, still little known, in different parts of the country, which originated among the people and do not have any relation whatsoever with our ancient dramatic tradition. The exact period of their origin is not known, and will probably be never known. But they have an underlying structure which is pan-Indian. Our knowledge about the more known theatres is also inadequate. We do not know how they were actually performed in the medieval period and at what stage of their growth they acquired some elements from the classical theatre. We should not also forget that some of the features which we tend to believe as borrowings from the ancient traditions could have been borrowed from folk drama as well. The erection of a pole, for example, in the *aṅkīyānāṭa* which is often claimed as a continuation of the *jarjara* ceremony mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, could have been part of some rite observed by the common man long ago before it became a part of classical drama. Similarly the installation of the image of a god and a *jar* (*garabī*) might not have any connection or been one a chronological development from the other, but might be representations of two different traditions, great and little. The preliminaries in most of the medieval performances in which one notices a connection with the *pūrvaraṅga* of Sanskrit theatre were in all probability a later innovation. Evidences can be adduced from literary history. One finds in the Bengali *māṅgal kāvya*s (see my article on long verse forms in JJCL 22) a purāṇic garb which in a slenderly



added to the main story. The purāṇic crust was added to the stories, which were of a folk origin, to give a greater respectability and to connect them with a pan-Indian tradition. Similarly, plays which were once confined to a smaller group, or to the people of the lower hierarchic order in a caste-based society, did not have any elaborate preliminaries. But once they were accepted by the people belonging to the higher orders, the process of stylization started and an elaborate schematization began. This is partly reflected in the terminology. The more the stylization in the performance the more elaborate was the terminology, a great part of which was borrowed from Sanskrit or coined on the basis of Sanskrit. The *aṅkiyā-nāṭa*, for example, which grew out of simple performances was stylized by means of the finest details. The preliminaries followed closely the rules of *pūrvarāṅga* as laid down by Bharata. And now we have terms like *pratyāhāra* (beating of drums), *avataraṇa* (arrival of the musicians), *ārambha* (beginning of the music), *āśṛavanā* (tying of the musical instruments), *saṁśvadanā* (turning up and manipulation of instruments and hand gestures), *āśuritā* (orchestration of the music of stringed instruments), and then *gīta* (a song propitiating the gods), followed by *tāṇḍava* (a violent dance), *utthāpana* (hoisting of the banner) by the *sūtradhāra* and finally the *nāndī*. Such an exercise in elaboration and schematization can be compared with that of the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas who created a new poetics on the model of Sanskrit *ālankāra śāstra*, which the Bengali poets of the post-Chaitanya period followed with reverence.

On the basis of the manner of presentation the medieval theatre falls into two groups : (a) those performed in the temple courtyard, e.g. the *kuṭiy-aṭṭam*, the *aṅkiyānāṭa*, and (b) those which are open-air theatre, e.g. the *bhavāī*, *yātrā*, *tāmāśā*, *rāmlīlā*. But one also notices that some performances that are primarily open-air, retain some connection with temples. They can be also grouped in terms of the role played by the *sūtradhāra* on the one hand and by the *vidūṣaka* on the other.

Among the major performances to which we have referred, the term *sūtradhāra* is used in the *aṅkiyānāṭa*. But there are several terms used in different performances, referring to a personage who can be related to the *sūtradhāra* though their functions are not necessarily identical. I am listing some of these terms, without suggesting either any etymological connection, or any chronological relation among them. It is only for the convenience of analysis that I am taking the *sūtradhāra* as a conceptual component to which all these terms are related directly or indirectly.

Bhāgavata		Swāmī
Nathuvānar		
Melāgāra	<i>Sūtradhāra</i>	Vyāsa
Kathāgāra		Nāyak
Kāṭṭiyakkāraṇ		Raṅga
Nāmbiār		Sardār
		Mukhya
	<i>Sūtradhāra</i>	Adhikārī

The various names of the director and/or the leading actor, listed in the first group on the left hand side of the chart suggest certain interesting things. The *kathāgāra* (the teller of tales) is related to the story-teller tradition, while the *melāgāra* only defines his role as the head of the *melā* (performance). In the *kucipaḍi*, a *bhāgavata* performs the role of a *sūtradhāra*, as well as that of an actor ; hence he is also called the actor. In *kurvañji* plays the *kāṭṭiyakkāraṇ* (*kāṭṭiyam*=to introduce the character) is the counter-part of the *sūtradhāra*. One finds the similar function of a character in folk plays like *terrukuthu* and *vīthināṭaka* as well. In the *kuṭiyaṭṭam*, it is the *nāmbiār* who presents the story. The *sūtradhāra* of *aṅkiyānāṭa* dances, sings the *nāndī*, announces the theme of the play, takes part in the action and remains on the stage throughout the performance.

In some performances of the *rāmlilā*, the chief narrator is known as *vyāsa* (the name refers to the author/narrator of the Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata*) and there is a character called *swāmī* in the *rāsalilā*. The *swāmī*, customarily a brahmin, is generally the director of a performance, not a narrator, and thus comparable to the *adhikārī* of the Bengali *yātrā* who is both a director and a manager. The *naṭaṅki* has a character, *raṅga* (also known as *bhaniṭ*), who enters after the preliminaries and sings the theme of the play. The *bhavaī* has a *nāyak*, the *tāmāsā* a *sardār* and the Sindhi *maskh* a *mukhya kirdār*. All these terms mean a leader or a chief. It is also interesting to know that in the *ntūḍalapāya*, a variant of the *yakṣagāna* prevalent in certain parts of northern Karnataka, a character called *sārathī* (literally, a chariot-driver) introduced the characters. Some of these terms indicate some measure of extension of the function of a character who was originally an introducer. The distinction between an introducer/director and an actor

was not maintained everywhere. At times the chief actor performs the role of the *sūtradhāra*. In one type of *vithināṭakā*, the *bhāmākalapa* in particular, the hero performs the duties of the *sūtradhāra*--he narrates the story and he takes the role of Mahavi, the female companion of Satya-bhāmā, as well as the role of Mādhava/Mādhavudu, the male companion of Krishna. On occasions his role overlaps with that of a jester.

The point I want to emphasize is that although these characters have resemblances to the Sanskrit *sūtradhāra*, there is not sufficient evidence to describe them as his descendants. Medieval India witnessed the emergence of professional groups as well as professional castes, such as the *cārāṇa* (they are believed to be the descendants of the *sūtas* of the epic days,) who earned their bread by reciting and narrating stories and by singing ballads. It is possible that when regional drama finally emerged it retained some of the features of the tradition of one-actor narration. The existence of the *kathak* in Bengal, the *kīrtankār* in Karnataka (who used to sing the *harikathā*), the *ghālhiar* (story-teller) in Sindh etc might have contributed to the growth of a character in regional drama whose functions became similar to those of the *sūtradhāra*. The independent origin of these characters, at least in some of the regional plays, is a strong possibility. One need not be, however, dogmatic about either of the possibilities -- one, that these characters have a definite link with the Sanskritic tradition, the other, that these characters are of an independent origin. In all probability both the processes, the process of evolution as well as the process of synchronical diffusion, were in operation in the dramatic activities throughout the history of India. This can be further evident from the character of the clown in the Indian theatre.

All types of medieval Indian dramatic performance present a clown or a jester. The *ankīyānāṭa* is generally cited as the sole exception. Most probably it did not have a jester in its early days but now concessions are made to such a character obviously due to public demand. The *vidūṣaka* occurs in Sanskrit plays including those of Bhāsa. M.L. Varadapande suggests on the basis of a verse in the *Gamanī Samyutia* that the *naṭa* (actor) was originally a figure of mirth, the assumption being that "humour was his main business."<sup>44</sup> Whether the *naṭa* was essentially a "figure of mirth" or not may be disputed, but one can assume that among the *naṭas*, one was perhaps a comedian or in the due course of time the role of a comedian assumed greater importance. When compared with the Sanskrit plays, one notices the predominance of the clown figure in the regional plays and the

question whether the clown of the regional plays is an evolution of the *vidūṣaka*, or the *vidūṣaka* of the Sanskrit plays is actually borrowed from the regional plays, cannot be dismissed. Let us look at the various terms for the clown in different types of plays.

<i>terms for the clown</i>	<i>the type in which they occur</i>
Vidūṣaka Kaṭṭiyam	Kuṭiyattam Chavittu-nāṭakam (Kerala)
Konnagi Chodigādu Hāsyā gādu	Kucipuḍi & Bhāgavatamelā
Koḍāṅgi Hanumānāyaka Hāsyagāra	Yakṣagāna
Raṅgalo Soṅgāḍya Kaṭṭiyakkāraṇ Munshiji Mansukh Bhāṇḍ Maskhiro Maskara Behuwa	Bhavāi Tāmāṣā Terukuthu Nautāṅki Līlā plays Naqliā Māskh Bānda Paethar Aṅkiyānāṭa

This list indicates a very low frequency of the term *vidūṣaka* in Indian drama, although all its types have a clown figure. In these plays one notices that the function of the clown is often much wider than that of his Sanskritic counterpart. The clown or a fool acts as a liaison between the performance and the audience, the mythological and the real, the divine and the human. Quite often he establishes a rapport with the audience by penetrating into contemporary problems and thus by deliberately creating an anachronism. His humour is often crude, but he is a critic of the characters presented in the play as well as of society at large. He is a fool but at times he is the wisest man on the stage. His character has two aspects, clowning and criticizing which often merges with philonophizing. The *bhāṇḍ*

in Panjabi farces (*naqal*), the *raṅgalo* in *bhavāi*, the *soṅgāḍya* in *tāmāśā* or the *maskhiro* of *maskh* are clowns as well as critics. The *vivek* (conscience) of the Bengali *yātrā* is the representation of the philosophizing aspect of the clown and is totally free from his entertaining aspect. In the *rām-līlā* one does not find a clown, but the role of a jester is partly carried out collectively by the monkeycharacters. Similarly in *kṛṣṇalīlā*, a friend of Krishna often performs the function of a jester. In the *naṭṭaṅki*, the jester does not have a type name, but assumes different names in different plays. It is very clear indeed that all these characters emerged out of people's experience and the medieval Indian theatre did not borrow them from Sanskrit drama. They are not descendants of the *vidūṣaka*, but members of a family to which the *vidūṣaka* also belongs. In fact the clown figure is pan-Indian and the characters belonging to this family emerged at different times to suit the needs of the audience. The *aṅkīyānāṭa* which tried to dispense with the clown, finally yielded to the popular pressure and included a character called *behuwā*, and a type of song, *ḍhemāli*, that provided moments of comic relief. The *vivek* of *yātrā*, yet another instance of innovation, is a new development from the pan-Indian clown.

The terms for the 'green room' and 'stage' also point towards the regional identities of these plays and of course their affinities with the classical tradition. The word *raṅgasthala* or *raṅgamañca* is hardly used in any one of these medieval plays, although they are now used with greater frequency in modern plays. The *yakṣagāna* uses *raṅgasthala* but the more frequent, and possibly the earlier usage, is *cauki*. Similarly it uses the word *nepathya* (which is a hyper-Sanskritization of the Prakrit *ṇēvaccha* meaning 'dress', 'disguise', and which could be derived, according to R.L. Turner, from *naivastya*) but the more frequent word is *baṇṇā haccuvā cauki* (a place where painting is done). The *yātrā* uses the word *āsar*, the *bhavāi* the *pauḍh* or *cācar*, the *tāmāśā* uses the *phāḍ* and the *naql* the *maṇḍua* (this could have been derived from the Sanskrit *maṇḍapaka*), the common word for 'stage' in Panjabi.

The main objective of a study of the various terminologies is not merely to show the nature of the relationship between various literary and dramatic traditions existing in medieval India. The more important objective is to discover the uniqueness of certain structural features in our literary works reflected in these terminologies. Even if we accept the pan-Indian features as a broad frame of reference to understand the peculiarities of different art forms, these features cannot be derived only from our classical

tradition. A minute study of each one of these forms produced in different languages and evolved in different regions can provide us with insights to discover their unifying conceptual patterns. Such a study will show that it is not always possible to integrate all the features into neat patterns and one has to recognize the importance of regional features. Several scholars in Europe have thought of a universality of literary terminology but the limitations of this belief are too obvious. Professor Petrovic's critical evaluation of the dictionaries of literary terms prepared by western scholars, have pointed out that European terms which are regarded as universally applicable, can be used in discussions of oriental literatures at best as only quite approximate descriptions or metaphorical evocations and we may add, often leading to misunderstanding. This is also true of the application of Sanskritic terms in the criticism of medieval Indian literatures. Quite often the medieval terms relating to short and long verse forms or various dramatic performances grew independently of the conception with which we are familiar in Sanskrit poetics and dramaturgy. A study of analogies or equivalence between these terms and the terms available in Sanskrit can present a clear picture of the Indian literary scene. A superficial pan-Indianism, which overlooks the diversities of regional traditions, will be of little use. The support that a preconceived pan-Indianism provides to the idea of a single universe of Indian literary expression is feeble. But when such an idea emerges from the study of the diverging and converging features of the Indian literary-dramatic complex, it has a greater empirical validity. The study of terminologies aims towards that direction.

#### NOTES

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1 Suresh Avasthi, "Nāṭak kā Adhyayan, Paramparā aur Siddhānt", *Ādhunik Hīndī Nāṭak aur Raṅgamāñc*, ed. Nemichand Jain (Macmillan : Delhi, 1978), p. 171.

2 Jagadish Chandra Mathur and Dasharath Ojha, *Prācīn Bhāṣā Nāṭak* (Delhi, 1972), Introduction.

3 Canto III of the epic is particularly important in this respect. Because of the dominant part played by music and dance this epic is often called *nāṭakāpiyam*.

(dramatic epic) and also as *muṭṭammilkkāppiyam* (the epic of threefold Tamil i.e. music, dance and poetry). Dr. R Ravindran has discussed the dramatic aspect of this epic in *A Comparative Study of Commentaries in Tamil with Special Reference to Aṭiyārkkunallār*, Ph.D. thesis, Madurai Kamaraj University, 1977 (unpublished). Also see M. Shanmugam Pillai, "Cilappaṭikaram – A Proto-form of Terukkūttu", *Journal of Asian Studies*, II, 1 (September, 1984), pp. 51-62.

4 K V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (Wiesbaden, 1974), p. 294.

5 We know of several groups of performers such as pāṇan, poruṇan, kūttāṇ and viralai during the Sangam period who used to move from place to place. *Cilappadikaram* mentions the group Kuttāccakkaiyar. See A.N. Perumal, *Tamil Drama, Origin and Development*, (International Institute of Tamil Studies, Adaiyaru : Madras, 1981).

6 See D.R. Mankad, *The Types of Sanskrit Drama* (Karachi, 1936), p. 82.

7 C.B. Gupta, *The Indian Theatre* (Benaras, 1954), p. 34.

8 M. Christopher Byrski, *Concept of Ancient Indian Theatre* (Munshiram Manoharlal : Delhi, 1974), pp. 101-43.

9 C. Ravindran, "Tamil Drama : An Introduction", paper presented at a seminar on Indian Drama in the Department of Modern Indian Languages, University of Delhi, 1978 (unpublished).

10 See S.A.K. Durga, *The Opera in South India* (Delhi, 1979), p. 24.

11 For the *kuṭiyattam* see V. Raghavan, "The Kutiyattam : its form and Significance as Sanskrit Drama", *Sanskrit Rang Annual*, (Madras, 1964-65, 1966-67). Kapila Vatsyayan, *Traditional Indian Theatre* (National Book Trust : New Delhi, 1980). Also Krishna Chaitanya, *A History of Malayalam Literature*. (Orient Longman : New Delhi, 1971).

12 Tamil uses both *ambalam* and *āraṅgam*.

13 H.K. Ranganath, *The Karnataka Theatre* (Karnataka University Press : Dharwad, 1960), pp. 15-18.

14 See *Abhinavābhīdhāna* (1378) by Maṅgarāja, ed. by M. Mariyappan (1952), p. 25, cited in Ranganath, *ibid.*, p. 10.

15 E. Gordon Craig, "The Art of the Theatre", *The Theory of the Modern Stage*, ed. by Eric Bentley (Penguin, 1968), p. 114.

16 *Nāl* means 'place' (like Tamil 'nāḍu'), *pagarana* might be from the Sanskrit *prakaraṇa*. But it is also possible that it was originally a Dravidian word later Sanskritized.

17 Adya Rangacharya thinks that the *yakṣagāna* appeared in the 12th/13th century during the emergence and spread of Vaishnavism. The Vaishnava influence is easily discernible in the performance, not only in their themes, but also in the manner of their conclusion – when two characters, Rām (not of the Rāmāyaṇa, but Balarām) and Krishna appear on the stage. See Rangacharya, *The Indian Theatre* (National Book Trust : New Delhi, 1971), pp. 77f. For most authoritative detailed information, see Sivaram Karanth, *Yakṣagāna Bayalāṭa*, in Kannada (Putturu, 1957 ; 2nd ed. 1963).

18 The *bhāṅavata* introduces the characters. In the *Muṇḍalapāya*, a variant of the *yakṣagāna*, the same act is performed by a *sārathī*.

19 There are variants of the *yakṣagāna*, such as *mūḍalapāye*, a theatrical mode of north Karnataka, also known as *aṭṭalāṭa* (performance on the platform) or *bayalāṭa* (bayal – open air, āṭa – play) in the coastal districts of Karnataka.

20 See Vatsyayan, *op. cit.*, pp. 10f. ; also Durga, *op. cit.*, pp. 33f.

21 Vatsayan, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

22 For details see Narayan Chandra Goswami, *Satīyā Saṁskṛti Rūparekhā* (Jorhat, 1975), pp. 604f.

23 "Añkita karilā dekhi añkiyā ye nām", Goswami, *ibid.*, pp. 628-29.

24 Modern scholars of Assamese analyze the *añkiyānāṭas* by their external as well as internal features. According to *Santāvalī* there are seven constituents of the plays : (1) gāyana (song), (2) bāyana (playing of musical instruments), (3) śrutanāṭya (narration), (4) śloka (verse), (5) gīta (religious songs), (6) brajabuli (language), (7) co mukha (mask). The inner features (*antaraṅga*) are *ārambha*, *yatna*, *prāpti*, *āśā*, *niyatāpti*, and *phalāgama* (see Goswami, *ibid.*, p. 607).

25 *Bhāṭimā* may be related to the eulogistic songs of the *bhāṭas* of Rajputana though the scholars are not unanimous on this point. Sankaradeva wrote three types of *bhāṭimā* : (1) *nāṭa bhāṭimā* (dramatic songs), (2) *deva bhāṭimā* (songs praising gods), (3) *rāja bhāṭimā* (songs praising the king). Of these only the first type is a part of the play, others are independent songs. Later Sri Madhavadeva, another distinguished leader of the Vaishnava movement in Assam, introduced the fourth type, the *guru bhāṭimā* (songs in praise of preceptors) See Maheshwar Neog, *Asamīyā Sāhityara Rūparekhā* (Gauhati, 1974), p. 97.

26 In Sanskrit plays the *sūtradhāra* speaks to a *naṭī*. In the *añkiyānāṭa* the *sūtradhāra* speaks to his companion who is not present on the stage.

27 *Co* may be related to *chau* which again can be derived from the Sanskrit word *chadma* (disguise). Some scholars, however, think that *chau* as in the *chau dance* is related to the Sanskrit *chāyā* (shadow) or the Hindi *chāuni* (cantonment). It is interesting to note that there is a Tibetan word *cham* which means a mask.

28 Sylvain Lévi, *Le Théâtre indien* (Paris, 1890), p. 152 ; H.H. Wilson, *Selected Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus*, 2 Vols. 3rd. ed. (London, 1871).

29 S.M. Tagore, *The Eight Principal Rasas of the Hindus* (Calcutta, 1879), p. 21.

30 Norvin Hein, *The Miracle Plays of Mathura* (Oxford University Press : Delhi, 1972), p. 17.

31 Uttarkāṇḍ : 209/2.

32 Vatsayan, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

33 Sukumar Sen thinks that this play belongs to the tradition of *pāñcālikā nāṭya* (puppet dance), *Bāngālā Sāhityer Itihās*, Vol. I (Calcutta 1963), p. 14.

34 S.K. De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Calcutta, 1962), Pt. I, pp. 401-02. Also see Amulya Charan Vidyabhushan, "Yātrā", *Bhārat Saṁskṛtir Udbhav*, ed. Sushil Kumar Gupta (Calcutta, 1965), pp. 735-52.

35 Vijayā daśamī laṅkā vijayer dine

Vānar saīnya hay prabhu laiṇā bhaktagane

hanumān beṣe prabhu bṛkṣa śākhā laiṇā

laṅkā gaḍe caḍi phele gaḍ bhāṅgiyā (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, II, 15)

36 Vidyabhushan, *op. cit.*, p. 641.

37 Radhagovinda Basak ed., *Aśoka Inscriptions* (Calcutta, 1959), pp. 2-3, 4.

38 There is a verse in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, 67.15) which says "nāṭa and nartakas are contendend during *utsava* and *samāja*, not during anarchy" : *nāṭajako janapade prahr̥ṣṭo nāṭa nartakāḥ | utsavaiśca samājalaiśca varidhate rāṣṭravardhanāḥ*.

39 M. Jhuverl, *History of Gujarati Literature* (Sahitya Akademi : Delhi, 1978), p. 244.



- 40 See Dasarath Ojha, *Hindi Nāṭakkū Udbhav aur Vikās* (Delhi, 1954), pp. 36-39.
- 41 *Suaṅga* developed as a full play in the 15th century as evidenced by *Lakṣmī Purāṇa Suaṅga* by Balarāma Dāsa.
- 42 The name of this play could have come from Nauṭaṅki, a princess whom Bhup-singh, a commoner, loved and finally married after a long period of suffering. This being the theme of a popular play, all plays of this type came to be known as *nauṭaṅki*.
- 43 Vatsayan, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
- 44 M.L. Varadapande, *Traditions of Indian Theatre* (Delhi, 1979), p. 83.
- 45 Svetozar Petrovic, "The Dictionary of Literary Terms and the Concept of Literary Terminology", *The Art of the World* (Zagreb, 1969), p. 285.

## AUBREY MENEN AND KAMALA DAS ANGLO-DRAVIDIAN REVOLT AGAINST ARYAN MYTHS

MOHAMED ELIAS

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In *Rama Retold*, Aubrey Menen explains why he undertook his literary excursion into Ayodhyā. According to him, Vālmīki's epic about the seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu, in the Brahminical version of the story that has come down to us, is in a bowdlerized form. He wants to restore the epic to its original spirit, and to revive the attitude of the ancient writer whose importance is seminal as he was "the first human being to be recognised as a literary genius. He was therefore penniless and much disliked.... He was an outlaw."<sup>1</sup> Menen's close relative, the poet Kamala Das, makes a similar attempt to explore Vṛndāvana, where the eighth avatar of the Preserver entertained his female admirers with so much panache that he became the incomparably alluring Kṛṣṇa. She writes in *My Story* of her experiences in emulating Rādhā, the seeker of love, "who waited on the banks of Jumna for her blueskinned lover. But she was another's wife and so an adulteress."<sup>2</sup> These mythopoeic self-images of the adulteress and of the outlaw are intriguing enough to invite some consideration of the revolt implicit in such debunking of cherished Aryan myths by Anglo-Dravidian writers like Aubrey Menen and Kamala Das.

Unlike Aubrey Menen, whose mother was Irish, Kamala Das is of pure Indian descent, but has an interesting theory: "I believe that all of us have a couple of parents at the beginning of our lives giving flesh and form, but that our real parents are chosen by us after we grow old enough to make such a choice. My father working in a British-owned automobile firm in Calcutta seemed at that time far more distant than Walt Whitman who spoke to me answering all the unasked questions lurking in my mind."<sup>3</sup> This literary lineage prompted her to write "half-English, half-Indian"<sup>4</sup> poetry, and even to wish away the secondary Indian half into a limbo. "I wonder why I was born to Indian parents instead of to a white couple who may have been proud of my verses." (*My Story*, p. 9)

The sensitive young woman makes a significant point in her reference to the feeling of being abandoned by her father who had moved to Calcutta in search of professional advancement. Like others who have gone to northern cities from southern villages, her parents had got adjusted to the mainstream of Indian life. But their rebellious daughter feels a sense of alienation from them and their society. The values of this society of 'wheelers and dealers' fall short of the ideals instilled in her by poets

like Whitman, and by the imported Victorianism of convent education. Thus the longing for white parents stems from a strong repulsion for her parents who are identified with the lack of integrity in the promiscuous culture of mongrel cities where everything is adulterated materially and morally. "Like the majority of city-dwelling women, I too tried adultery for a short while, but found it distasteful." (*My Story*, p. 204) Paradoxically for someone in her position, the milieu of foreign literature must have seemed as pure as that of her rural life. In contrast to this was the lack of integrity prevailing in northern cities. They are almost cesspools of corruption not only in human relationships but in politics, religion, law, language, art, architecture and almost every other sphere of human activity that has suffered rapine and conquest at the hands of succeeding waves of marauding Greeks, Mongols and the British, not to speak of the less enterprising French, Dutch, Portuguese, Arabs, Afghans, Persians and others. This is the adulterated filth that disgusts the fastidious southerner when she too has in her turn to accompany her bureaucrat-husband on his assignments. What she sees in the urban north raises in her an inner fury that expects no quarters: "City fathers, friends and moralists, if I were a sinner, do not forgive my sin. If I were innocent, do not forgive my innocence. Burn me with torches in the night. Burn my proud Dravidian skin and burn the tumult at the core." (p. 206) The same racial pride in her Dravidian identity surfaces again on a more workaday plane when she complains of the treatment her husband is subjected to in his office at the hands of presumably Aryan colleagues. Justifying her advice to him to be aggressive, she declares: "For a Dravidian humble pie of any kind is the unhealthiest diet." (p. 217)

The woes of contemporary Dravidians typified in this description by his wife of Mr Das's office ordeals, can be seen in a wider perspective in the account his cousin Aubrey Menen gives of what had happened in the past. In *The New Mystics*, while commenting on the egalitarianism of the holy Upanishads, Menen describes the Aryans as "originally coming from the vicinity of the Aral Sea in Russia about two thousand years before Christ. After their invasion, large parts of northern India were conquered, but the south remained mostly in Dravidian hands.

The invaders called themselves "Aryans", which means "noble": the original inhabitants called themselves a wide variety of names, which we nowadays lump together for convenience under the name "Dravidians". The Aryans had a fair

skin, fair hair and blue eyes. The Dravidians had black hair, a deep brown complexion and dark eyes.

The complexion of the Aryans was the colour of oatmeal. It was quite obvious to them that it was better to have an oatmeal face than a brown one. An oatmeal face, they further argued, was a sign that they were racially superior to the Dravidians, whom, to drive the point home, they called "black".

Unfortunately for this view, the Aryans were not superior to the blacks. They were way behind them. The blacks had towns; the Aryans were so far from having them they did not even have a word to describe them, so they borrowed one from the blacks. The blacks could build with bricks, which the Aryans could not. They had fortresses which gave the superior invaders a good deal of trouble: they knew a great deal about agriculture, which the Aryans, who were a pastoral people, had to learn.

It was thus clear to the Aryans that the blacks should be kept in their place and that place, preferably, should be as low in the social scale as possible. It should not be forgotten that it was this racial prejudice which gave rise, by devious paths, to the Upanishads. I do not mean that the Upanishadic sages liked the colour of oatmeal, or that they thought that black was beautiful. On the contrary, they taught that the whole thing was nonsense.<sup>5</sup>

In a notable corollary, Menen refers to the Nazis "who also called themselves Aryans" (p. 14). This is an indication of the larger ramifications of the problem in a world context, where the Aryan-Dravidian conflict appears as a universal and timeless phenomenon of aggression and resistance.

*Rama Retold* is concerned with this wider dimension. As Gerald Bullett observes in his review of the novel, "Though the story is set in a remote time it contains many a sly, covert allusion to present day problems."<sup>6</sup> One of these problems is certainly the black-white polarization in racial conflicts that is increasingly becoming evident, especially in the postcolonial world. Appropriately, its echoes have a personal depth in Menen's own case, going back to his own birth as the son of a white woman who chose a darkskinned husband. She had a fondness she said, even as a child, for brown faces. From among the dolls she and her friends used to dress and give to the missionaries, she always liked the brown ones. This rankled in the son's mind, and his autobiography, *The Space Within the Heart*, shows that when, during an audience, the Pope John XXIII raised doubts as to his nationality, it was hard for him not to speak out the bitter words that had to be suppressed: "Neither English nor Indian, Holy Father. I am the child of a doll and a wilful woman. May I ask your apostolic blessing for the doll, Holy Father? It was a very Christian doll. It was meant for missionaries, but I do not know if they were Catholic."<sup>7</sup> He also recalls that at the University College,

London, when he won a bursary called "Rosa Morison" they gave him a certificate and some books, but regretfully stated that the cash was reserved for a student of "pure British descent on both sides" (p. 46). Earlier, at school, his classmates made fun of his Indianness by nicknaming him "Rajah of Jampot" (p. 37). But when it came to reading aloud to the class from Rudyard Kipling's famous novel *Kim*, the teachers always selected him, "my coloring adding drama to the recital."<sup>8</sup> No wonder then that this sense of being a dark alien among white masses persisted, and led Menon at one time to join hands with V.K. Krishna Menon in campaigning for the freedom of India from British rule. It is also this commitment that brought him into conflict with Time-Life Books more recently when he refused to follow their editor's instructions to conform to white images of Asians in writing a book about the city of Bombay. He declared: "Mahatma Gandhi once described an anti-Indian book (*Mother India* by Catherine Mayo) as a 'drain-inspector's report'. The inspectors in Britain are in their preferred sewers again, with unfortunately, an Anglophile American leading the way."<sup>9</sup>

Man's inhumanity to man, universal and timeless, manifests itself in terms of class, creed, colour or caste. Perhaps the oldest and worst form of it was that inflicted by the victorious Aryans on the defeated Dravidians. For Menon, who had during the Second World War organized allied propaganda over the All India Radio, denouncing the Aryanism of Hitler's Germany, it was natural to be concerned with this racial oppression of which his own Dravidian ancestors had been the victims. Menon is not, however, influenced by the Dravidian political movements, and has stated that he has not even heard of E.V. Ramaswami Naicker.<sup>10</sup> But sympathy for the Dravidians is prominent in *Rama Retold* from the outset. The novel opens with a description of Ayodhya under Aryan occupation, the native Dravidian population having been reduced to serfdom: "These black men were princes, sons of the blood royal, dukes, landowners and knights. They owned the land on which Ayoda (sic) stood, but they had had the misfortune of having it taken away from them by armed robbers in the past, the robbers being the ancestors of the more fair, and Aryan inhabitants." (p. 6) Menon goes on to state that the Aryans justified depriving the Dravidians of their land by inventing a myth about God's displeasure with the Dravidians. They then ensured that their victims would remain docile by giving them humiliating tasks like cleaning out the city's latrines.

Ravan is the leader of the survivors among the Dravidians, who have retreated southwards, and his Lanka is the last stronghold of Dravidian resistance. But the king and the kingdom are both overshadowed with tragic doom. Ravan personifies both the strong and the weak aspects of Dravidian culture in its days of decline as Menen interprets it. He appears first as "a tall man clad in black armour" (p. 119). Seeing the casually attired Luxmun, he mistakes the young prince for a man of low birth, who should not have been so bold as to drink from a well reserved for the use of Ravan himself and his peers. Ironically, it is the similar use of wells that in our own day the lower castes are sometimes denied by the orthodox Aryans in remote and backward villages. It is ironic that Menen should turn the tables in this way. It serves to emphasize that class consciousness is just as bad as caste complexes, and that the Dravidians were no angels. They had their own faults that led to their downfall. In any case, when Ravan attacks with a nasty blow of his javelin the defenceless Luxmun, we see an ugly aspect of this bully and his bandit mob of derelict Dravidians. But Luxmun proves to be more than a match for the bully, and forces Ravan to turn tail in haste. We see more than poetic justice here. This encounter between Ravan and Luxmun speaks volumes in prefiguring the turn of events that culminate in the rout of the Dravidians.

Sita's captivity in Lanka is even more revealing in its sidelights on Ravan and his Dravidians. She meets Ravan for the first time during a solitary walk through the woods, and is favourably impressed since "he talks so well" (p. 124). His glib flattery and ingratiating ways are those of a consummate ladies' man. His actions are predictable on the occasion when Sita decides to sacrifice herself, in order to save her husband and his friends at Valmiki's ashram, as they are about to be overrun by the Dravidians. Her plan is to go with Ravan voluntarily. She lets him think that she is making a bargain with him to spare the ashramites. But as she recalls: "I meant to kill myself rather than keep my promise. I think I would have killed myself if he'd have come to me as I expected, all drunk and brutal." (p. 202) But he played a trick on her. "The oldest trick of them all. He just said that he loved me above everything in the world and that he would never force me to do anything I did not want. I was pleased at first. Then I was sorry for him. Then he kissed me. Then I wasn't a heroine any more."

It is this bit of realism about feminine psychology that has offended

Indian susceptibility, and provoked Menen's angry self-vindication in the course of an article entitled "Return to India" :

Now, it was Hindu womanhood that got me into trouble with my book that the Hindus banned. The ideal woman is Sita, the wife of a hero of ancient times called Rama. Sita was the perfect spouse. She followed her husband into exile, walking the ritual few steps behind him. She was utterly devoted to him and completely faithful. She was abducted by a thoroughly bad man. In spite of his ardent advances, she remained—in the legend—faithful to her husband. The ravisher was justly killed. Sita returned to her husband. All I did in my retelling of this story was to point out that, in the circumstances, only one person could ever know if Sita had really been faithful, and that was Sita herself. In the legend, Sita is very nearly burned alive in a test by ordeal. But, as I said in the book, had she been burned to a cinder, it still would not have settled the question.

Now, I cannot imagine such a point of view annoying anybody except a husband who suspects he is a cuckold. Then, I agree, my little book could drive him slowly mad. Perhaps, indeed, the book was banned by a committee of such men. I do not know. I only mention the matter to show how deeply the Hindu feels—or felt—about women.

The best way of avoiding the perplexity of Rama is to lock up your wife in the back quarters of the house and never introduce her to your male friends. This, more or less, is the fate of a true Hindu wife. She is rarely seen in public, and then only as a sort of shrinking timorous shadow of her husband. She has her compensations. While she does not open her mouth in public, she rarely shuts it at home. Her husband is her lord and master, at least until he wants to go to bed with her. So the Hindu wife can rule the roost if she wants to. But her social life is confined to women.<sup>11</sup>

Menen then goes on to narrate a visit he paid to the home of Kamala Das in Calcutta. He describes her as a modern Indian woman who is not happy with her emancipation, since she yearns to turn back the clock in her search for "an old-style husband, a Malabar husband, a husband who comes to me only after dark" (p. 48). In the old Nayar families this was indeed the custom even in the recent past. The husbands, often Brahmins, used to pay brief visits to the polyandrous matriarchs late at night.

In Kamala Das's poetry and fiction, this nocturnal visitor becomes identified with the adulterous god, Kṛṣṇa. As she has declared : "I looked for the beauteous Krishna in every man."<sup>12</sup> Many of her poems, especially "Vrindavan" and "Radha Krishna" are, as Devindra Kohli points out, attempts to mythologize "the woman's search for Krishna the eternal lover."<sup>13</sup> It is the boredom with a dull office-going husband that makes the woman a devotee of the eternal lover in "The Stone Age", a poem about the atony of her life. She feels that he comes in the

form of several surrogate husbands who haunt her days and dreams. In the ultimate triumph is hers, since their conquests are as illusory as those of the daily suns that rise mightily in the firmament, only to repeatedly go down at the end of each day before the western sea off the Malabar coast: "...they sink / Like white suns in the swell of my Dravidian blood."<sup>14</sup>

The poet's racial pride is evident in this capacity to absorb the onslaughts of Aryan/Brahmin lovers/husbands. Their triumphant conquests dim in the night when they lie supine on matriarchal beds in the traditional love posture preferred by Nayar women. This identification of the Dravidian as Nayar is a reasonable assumption. For, the most outstanding of the men described in the poem as "a lion / a libertine" reappears in a short story entitled "The Sign of Lion". He makes the narrator-heroine visit him at his home, but she prefers to think that "He is the Brahmin husband who comes to lie near his Nayar wife. She will be the dark rider on the pale horse of his lust. Before the east pales they part."<sup>15</sup> He leaves her with many terrors. It is her impression that before the cock crows thrice he would betray her. If she ever became careless and got pregnant "he will take me to Lonavala and with tenderness kill me." This terrifying figure is the Aryan god of love: "His dark skin reminded me of Krishna The libertine. The inconstant lover. The monarch." (p. 74) His victims are everywhere: "At night from the invisible jungles, from the lush fox-holes, his concubines wail: Oh Krishna, come to me. I clasp him to my breast. I cuddle him. The women wail on." (pp. 74-75)

Aubrey Menen has suggested that "Hinduism is largely the product of the despised blacks, one of whose gods was an early form of Krishna." (*New Mystics*, p. 14) If so, the dark skin apart, little has survived of his Dravidian identity. Indeed, when the Aryans adopted Kṛṣṇa into their pantheon, the highest caste among them, the Brahmins, made him an avatar of Viṣṇu, their Preserver. This may be the reason why he has such an ambivalent role in the imagination of Kamala Das. Certainly, the terrified fascination with which she clings to his adulterous embrace has much to do with a general sense of revolt. It may be common to all women who have to overcome their timorousness, but feel that they are tied to household chores, with little hope of love from husbands who return home with files they could not finish in the office. But there is also the significant suggestion that her Dravidian blood has the capacity to extinguish and contain all the Aryan males who perpetrate their amorous



conquests upon her. Under the influence of such ideological pressure, it would appear, mythological figures reveal new faces.

Like Aubrey Menen, Kamala Das has a very unorthodox view of the relationship between Rāvaṇa and Sītā. In her myth-making imagination, a white Rāvaṇa takes shape as an Italian lover, "Carlo, who called me Sita and treated me with awe as though I were a goddess." (*My Story*, p. 161) This cannot be considered lightly as just a thoughtless and passing reference, coming as it does from a writer who has shown considerable sophistication in her handling of myths. Indeed both Aubrey Menen and Kamala Das seem to be unwilling to subscribe to the traditional image of Sītā, which has been widely exploited to subject women to an insidious form of bondage in most parts of India. Very different from this has been the position of the Nayar female, probably as a result of the more favourable image of women associated with the creation myth of Kerala. Kamala Das herself narrates the story, incidentally, in an article about Aubrey Menen. The Malabar coast, where women live dignified lives, came into existence following an act of cruelty on the part of Paraśurāma. Known as Rāma with the Axe, he is the sixth incarnation of Viṣṇu. Born as the son of a beautiful serpent-princess Renukā, Paraśurāma has had to kill her in obedience to the wishes of his father Jamadagni, who suspects her of infidelity. The innocent mother's dying look haunts Paraśurāma, and he roams the world carrying on his shoulder the blood-stained axe. At last in repentance he throws the weapon into the Arabian Sea from which rises the verdant coast bordering the Western Ghats. To atone for the wrong done to his mother, Paraśurāma decrees that women shall be free in this new land of his and grants them special privileges. "They inherited the property. They changed husbands at their will. Such laws, as time went by, helped the Nair woman to look arrogantly beautiful. Even in love-postures she did not permit her mate to mount her."<sup>16</sup> But the good old days are almost gone, and so it would seem has Paraśurāma. The Dravidian Sītā therefore seeks solace in the arms of a white Rāvaṇa.

Ethnic minorities such as the Dravidians exist in many parts of the decolonized world. Under the threat of being overwhelmed by the swarming majorities, they too might overtly or covertly try to ameliorate their sense of insecurity by such means of cultivating self-assurance and self-respect as demonstrated in the foregoing examples from the works of Aubrey Menen and Kamala Das. In this context, Kamala Das's wishful thinking about Walt Whitman and white parents falls into a pattern with

# CREATURES OF AN OUTRAGEOUS REALITY A STUDY OF THE NARRATIVE STYLES OF TWO THIRD WORLD WRITERS

ARUNDHATI BANDYOPADHYAY

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In the major works of Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay, a rather neglected Bengali author of the late 19th century, an attempt to approach and reveal the different aspects of contemporary life through a lattice of popular folklore and fairy tales can be discerned. Whether Trailokyanath was consciously trying to build a new narrative mode, indigenous to his own culture, will forever remain a subject for conjecture, but literary historians and critics who have evaluated his works, have looked upon him either as a writer of nonsense and fairy tales for children or as a socio-politically conscious and committed author. A proper evaluation of Trailokyanath's works could have, in all probability, enriched Bengali literature with the heritage of a new form of narrative.

When Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a Latin American writer, writing in the tradition of a well-developed narrative fiction, almost a century after Trailokyanath, defines his concept of reality as the art of looking at "reality with innocent and uncorrupted eyes", he rejects the strictly rational mode of looking at things and endeavours to grasp the totality of the consciousness of his nation and its people. As a result, his novels and short stories are pervaded with elements of the supernatural which finely blend with the everyday, the ordinary, as well as the socio-political economic life of Colombia.

In this article I propose to analyze a major work by each of these authors, namely *Kankabati* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, with a view to illustrating the resemblance and divergence of their narrative styles.

Rabindranath Tagore, while discussing *Kankabati*, remarked on the sharp demarcation between the real and the 'un'-real in the narrative, pointing out that it was quite a jerk for the reader to change over from the everyday level to that of the extra-ordinary. The metaphor he used in this context—that of two trains colliding while travelling along the same tracks in opposite directions—is unjustified in many ways; yet it has a direct relevance to the sharp line Trailokyanath draws between the rational and the extra-rational. The novel is divided into two parts with an epilogue at the end. The first part or 'purva' describes the social milieu, the social hierarchy and the forces at work at the different levels of the society of

Kusumghati where Kankabati, the central character, lives. It is a village geographically non-existent on the map of Bengal. While describing the budding affection between Khetu and Kankabati, the author gives us a glimpse into the life of the village where customs and norms are completely under the control of those who are socially powerful, either through their wealth or because of their superior caste. The proposed marriage of Kankabati to the octogenerian zemindar of the village in exchange of a high bride-price, Khetu's judgment by the village elders, the ostracization of Khetu on account of his eating 'baraf' or ice, the forced exile of righteous Niranjana—all embody the oppressions practised by a socially powerful class on the poor and the unprivileged.

The second part of *Kankabati* is a departure from everyday reality through the framework of Kankabati's dream, where all sorts of extra-real incidents take place. There are ghosts and their female counterparts, the sahib-frog and the familiar characters from the rich heritage of Bengali fairy tales—such as the palm-leaf sipahi and the 'khokkosh'—all of whom coexist with human beings. At the very outset, as a prologue to the first part, Trailokyanath prepares his readers for the narrative style and structure of his novel by beginning with material borrowed from popular folklore centring around Kankabati, a girl who drowned herself because of an incestuous demand by her brother to marry her. While describing the geographical setting of Kusumghati, he acquaints his readers with the many superstitions and supernatural beliefs of the local inhabitants. These, together with the prologue and the frame, are the tools with which the author paves the path for the extra-real, shortly to be introduced into his narrative.

Unlike Trailokyanath's, Marquez's vision of reality conceives of the everyday and the extra-natural world as one where there is not even a thin line of demarcation between the two. There is no place in his novel for any kind of framework as used by Trailokyanath. The history or 'absence of history' of an obscure Colombian village, geographically non-existent like Kusumghati, encompasses the entire social, cultural, political and economic history of Latin America. The village of Macondo, whose origin is related directly to a popular superstition, experiences the scientific marvels brought in from an unknown and alien world by the gypsies; faces the historical reality of the rule of a magistrate, elections and war; sees the establishment of a church, a school, brothels, a telegraph office, a theatre, a cinema-house, a boatline and the railways; undergoes the atroci-

ties of neo-colonial expansion until it is wiped away, with its race of 'superstitious' though imaginative, 'uneducated' but wise, and 'uncivilized' yet persevering people. This record of the birth, development, exposure and degeneration of Macondo and hence of various, almost identical, villages of Latin America, is viewed through the eyes of the inhabitants of the village with their belief in the extra-natural. As a result, the yellow butterflies which accompany Mauricio Babilonia, Meme's lover, or the sack containing the bones of Rebecca's parents, which go 'cloc-cloc'-ing through the Buendia house, seem nothing out of the ordinary. What actually happens to astonish the reader, on the other hand, are the scientific devices which Melquiades, the wise gypsy, brings into Macondo. Seen through the eyes of the villagers, it is difficult to distinguish the marvels of science from the marvellous that exists in the consciousness of men. In fact, the latter is made to appear less 'un'-real to the reader than the former.

The dream-world in Trailokyanath's *Kankabati* is not a world of fantasy, for all that is extra-ordinary or extra-natural here is deeply rooted in the socio-economic milieu in which Trailokyanath was writing. It would not be out of context to note that there is no real literary shock in the sense Rabindranath pointed out, because Trailokyanath maintains the level of social criticism throughout the work, preserving at the same time the major characteristic traits of the dramatis personæ who had appeared in the first part of the novel and who reappear at the dream-level. Mr Gamish the frog, who is dressed up as a sahib and hates to be called a native in the presence of a third person, provides a good example of Trailokyanath's social criticism through fairy tale archetypes :

The frog looked strange. Kankabati was quite taken aback by his appearance. He was dressed like a 'pucca sahib'... in jacket and trousers complete with a hat on his head. It was difficult to recognize him. His complexion was still the same ... soap had not been of any help. Besides, he had not as yet been able to buy a pair of shoes. He would, of course, buy them later. Dressed in his fully European attire, with his hands in his pockets, he was strutting away.

This strange sight, despite the troubles she had been going through, brought a smile to Kankabati's lips. She decided to ask him the way.

"Excuse me, Mr Frog, could you please tell me which way the village is ?

How do I get there ?"

"Hit-mit-fat" - replied the frog.

Kankabati said, "But sir, I could not follow you. I asked you, how do I reach the village."

Kankabati said, "But, Mr Frog, you are speaking in English. I don't know English. Please speak in Bengali so that I can understand."

The frog looked around to see whether anyone else was there. There was no one. This precaution had only one reason—if anyone heard him talking in Bengali, he would be looked down upon as a 'native' and made an outcaste. Only after ensuring that there was no one around, did he venture to talk in Bengali.<sup>1</sup>

The Skull and the Skeleton, to cite another example, are out to convince unbelieving human beings of the existence of ghosts by setting up a business establishment, knowing that exposure to English education has converted Hindu youths to disbelievers, not only in gods and goddesses but also in ghosts. Their practical wisdom and acquaintance with the mental make-up of contemporary human beings have made them adopt an English name for their company, as otherwise no one will pay them any respect. Trailokyanath's consciousness of the political and economic plight of his country is revealed through his depiction of the mosquitoes who own all the inhabitants of Bharatvarsha and live on their blood.

Trailokyanath's critique of contemporary society is also expressed through the use of the extra-natural in incidents such as Kankabati's marriage to the tiger (Khetu in disguise), who pays a considerable amount of money to Tanu Ray, Kankabati's father. This is a splendid parallel to the prevailing social situation in which a father sells his daughter to a dying old man knowing full well the impending hardships of widowhood the young girl is fated for.

The fabric of Trailokyanath's 'un'-real world is woven mostly with fairy tale motifs like the frog and the tiger, the 'khokkosh' or the palm-leaf sipahi. But he also blends figures from his own imagination such as that of the mosquito leader Dirghasunda or the Skull and the Skeleton to enrich the texture of this fabric. For Trailokyanath there is a one to one correspondence between the 'un'-real and his real world.

In Marquez, on the other hand, the marvellous merges with the immediately perceptible, to give his reader a more profound understanding of the historical, political, economic and social life of his country. A good example of their difference in treatment of the 'un'-real is that in Marquez the dead belong to the realm of the living and have frequent communication with them, while Trailokyanath categorizes the dead as 'ghosts' and confines their movement to the dream-world.

Marquez's many-levelled merging of mythical reality with contemporary reality is illustrated in the insomnia plague. The plague which causes total oblivion of the past in the minds of the villagers finds its

historical parallel in the oblivion" that will later on in the narrative blot out the memory of the massacre of the strikers from the minds of the populace. Another illustration would be the incredible wealth of Aureliano Segundo through the marvellous multiplication of his cattle. This is in direct relation to the unstable and disbalanced prosperity of Macondo which began to flourish with the arrival of the Banana Company. The ascendance of Remedios the Beauty, the unearthly woman with her impeccable purity and inviolable innocence, is subtly related to the pollution of Macondo's purity through the vulgarity of the invading neo-Imperialists who, in a strange way, will be the ultimate cause of the decadence and extinction of the healthy and vital race which founded the village. Marquez's mastery of his material and craft is displayed in his description of the incident.

She had just finished saying it when Fernanda felt a delicate wind of light pull the sheets out of her hands and open them up wide. Amaranta felt a mysterious trembling on the lace of her petticoats and she tried to grasp the sheet so that she would not fall down at the instant in which Remedios the Beauty began to rise. Ursula, almost blind at that time, was the only person who was sufficiently calm to identify the nature of that determined wind and she left the sheets to the mercy of the light as she watched Remedios the Beauty waving goodbye in the midst of the flapping sheets that rose up with her, abandoning with her the environment of beetles and dahlias and passing through the air with her as four o'clock in the afternoon came to an end, and they were lost forever in the upper atmosphere, where not even the highest flying birds of memory could reach her.

The outsider, of course, thought that Remedios the Beauty had finally succumbed to her irrevocable fate of a queen bee and that her family was trying to save her honour with that tale of levitation.<sup>2</sup>

The deluge which rages for a period of years just after the massacre of Macondo, is loaded with several layers of meaning and can be interpreted at various levels. The eternal postponement of the agreement between the authorities and the workers of the Banana Company has a direct connection with the deluge. At another level, this almost extra-natural phenomenon can be interpreted as a super-natural punishment which drives the owners of the Banana Company out of Macondo.

Marquez's level of 'un'-real consists more of superstitions, super-natural beliefs, popular rituals and folk customs than of actual folktale figures. He uses the popular consciousness itself to build his extra-real world. The atmosphere of folklore and myth pervades his work though a direct representation of folktale or folk-motif is rare.

When Trailokyanath is working at the level of Kankabati's dream, he often uses fairy tale elements without any inherent social criticism. On such occasions, his handling of fairy tale motifs is either to intensify the atmosphere of dream or to evoke unadulterated humour. The white washing of the sky by Nakeshwari's aunt and the affair of the moon's foot are good instances.

For Marquez too, the matrix of popular beliefs is not always a medium for revealing a social or political reality. It is often a human truth that is illuminated through his use of the marvellous. The author's deep understanding of his own heritage is displayed through apparently extra-natural events such as the son's blood flowing against the gradient of the town to his mother's kitchen or the continuous shower of young flowers which carpet the streets of Macondo after the death of its founder. These are actually mythical explanations for basic human truths.

An attempt to identify the levels of reality in Trailokyanath's *Kankabati* will reveal that the contemporary reality of the author's milieu is there at the background. To represent and analyze the reality Trailokyanath works at two levels : the level of the social reality of Kusumghati and the level of dream reality into which fairy tales and folklore are fused. The first level is necessarily restricted to a few questions concerning a village and its circumscribed society while the second level broadens the perspective to include various political, economic as well as social problems.

The reality of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is multi-layered. Marquez displays a profound sense of history when he shows that reality as the masses of the Third World experience it, is not the reality of the rulers, the authorities or the superpowers who possess every device to distort and wipe out the actual events. This is well exemplified through the public denial of the existence of the Banana Company, of the massacre or the rigging. The reader, when faced with these incidents, is challenged by a serious question as to what, then, the form or shape of reality is for the common man who belongs to the masses. The extent of these distortions undermines our belief in the rational much more than do the superstitions of the people or the marvellous events that seem to grow out of the popular consciousness. The standpoint, that the people of the Third World need to find out for themselves a mode of expressing their own experience of the historical and political situation, accepting their heritage of supernatural beliefs and superstitions, is all the more enhanced by the depiction of these events. As the narrative progresses there is a de-

velopment in the depiction of the changing history of the people of Macondo. The early stage in the tale of the village is wrought with fantastic beliefs and marvellous reactions to the scientific and the rational. With an exposure to the outside world, the village seems to emerge into a state of reality that is determined by political and economic forces governing the nation. It would be wrong to say that the level of the imaginative and the supernatural is totally abandoned. But as Macondo after the desertion of the gringos and the closing down of the Banana Company slowly reverts back to isolation and to a corrupt primitive state, very different from its initial stages of primitivity, the world of the marvellous again invades the life of Macondo with all its force and grotesqueness. The laughing and happy world the reader came to know at the outset of the narrative is no more. At the intermediate stage, the political and the historical situation of the nation is depicted directly through the politico-historical situation of Macondo without any merging of the supernatural. A good instance would be Arcadio's dictatorship of Macondo or the Treaty of Neerlandia. On both these occasions individual and historical realities are fused.

Trailokyanath, writing in the late 19th century when the western form of the novel was gaining a firm ground on the soil of Indian culture, seems to have been conscious of the country's heritage of indigenous narrative forms. For *Kankabati*, he chose the style of the *kathakata*, the oral narrative mode still very much alive in the rural areas of Bengal, where the *kathak* or the teller of tales, narrates stories from the epics or the purāṇas to a predominantly unlettered audience gathered at the village *chandi mandap*. As a direct consequence to this choice of narrative style, the author and the narrator in *Kankabati* are the same person. That is to say, the communication between the author and the reader is direct and simple as in the telling of a tale. It is as if just like the *kathak* who simplifies complex "purāṇic" or epic episodes, Trailokyanath, too, simplifies complicated socio-economic problems by filtering and familiarizing them through popular folklore, in order to make his narrative attractive and acceptable to the common man.

The time sequence in *Kankabati* is linear and though the duration of Kankabati's dream at the level of everyday reality is twenty-two days, months pass in the actual sequence of events within the dream. The logical sequence of time and events, therefore, is ruptured only within the extra-real dream-level and not outside it.



In conversation with one of his fellow writers and friends, Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, Marquez commented on his own narrative art. "She (Marquez's grandmother) used to tell me about the most atrocious things, without turning a hair, as if it were something she'd just seen. I realized that it was her impassive manner and her wealth of images that made her stories credible. I wrote *One Hundred Years of Solitude* using my grandmother's method."<sup>8</sup> This is true not only as far as the narrative style is concerned but also of the ordering of narrative events. The logical sequence is broken and is turned topsy-turvy. This is one device that gives the novel its aura of 'un-real' reality. The chronology of incidents in the work is altered and reversed rapidly with the use of what can be termed as 'flashbacks' and 'flash-forwards' while several interruptions in the narrative take the reader from events centring around one character to those centring around another ; others move from a personal history to the history of the village and hence to the history of the nation. The impression that is formed through this frequent change of narrative focus is that of a person, who relates the story through memories and associations, rather than in accordance with chronology. This impression is heightened by the fact that time in this novel is not marked by dates or years, except for two or three exceptions, but by certain events, which are of great import in the lives of the people of Macondo, such as "the time when Colonel Aureliano Buendia faced the firing squad". This has a resemblance to the manner in which very old people narrate tales and histories embedded in their memory, marking time not by years or dates but by major events in their lives. This narrative technique is enhanced by the pace of the events in the novel. From the outset of the novel to the Treaty of Neerlandia the narrative moves at a comparatively slow pace, but after this point it seems to have gained a tremendous momentum when events begin to happen in rapid succession. This is in direct relation to a remark of Ursula Iguaran made towards the end of her life as to the changed pace of the movement of time. At several moments throughout the narrative there is an impression that the flow of time has somehow been arrested. This is underlined by Ursula's repeated remarks regarding the stoppage of time.

Though there is an apparent change of pace in the time sequence of Trailokyanath's narrative, yet it should be noted that the dream section is comparatively crowded into incidents. For Kankabati and the reader within the dream-world, historical time is suspended and the dream-time has gained an extra-normal pace.

The resemblance between Trailokyanath's and Marquez's tone is the undercurrent of immense compassion which they feel for humanity. Marquez himself speaks of this feeling of deep empathy. But Marquez's humour and satire are both more subtle than Trailokyanath's. It is almost difficult to trace them out or analyze them because they permeate the very tonal texture of the novel. What becomes distinct, though, is a marked tonal development as the narrative progresses. The novel begins with an abundance of laughing humour that is in direct relation to Macondo's 'un'-real, innocent, primitive state, fraught with popular beliefs and extra-natural happenings. Midway through the narrative the humour merges into subdued satire and irony as the narrative focus concentrates on the social, political and economic realities. Ultimately, this is turned into a sharp and bitter tone of cynicism as Macondo, exploited and ruined by the gringos, goes back to a corrupt and primitive stage once again, unreal in its isolation and submerged in the extra-natural.

Marquez's narrative style contains a certain dramatic tone. The subtle suspense which works at moments such as that of Melquiades' arrival long after it became known that he was dead, at the meeting between Pilar Ternera and Aureliano Babilonia or in the description of the massacre, illuminates this. The drama at such moments in the novel is often engendered by the conflict between the conventional sense of probability and Marquez's conception of it.

Without being conscious of it, Trailokyanath was the pioneer of a new narrative style in modern Bengali literature. The folklore and fairy tale motifs through which he delineates his critique of society were the media he used to reach the common Bengali reader. But as he could not totally abandon the western mode of the novel, he was not able to do away completely with the framework which he needed to introduce the extraordinary. A literary purpose is also served by the level of the marvellous within the dream structure. The wish-fulfillment, the desired marriage between Khetu and Kankabati that is near-impossible in everyday reality, becomes possible when the narrative returns back to the level of actuality in the epilogue, as, by now, the suspension of disbelief is complete through Trailokyanath's introduction of marvellous elements at the dream-level. It is interesting to note here that in the dream-world, the ghosts, the

For Marquez, relating to a larger audience in the masses is almost as important as enriching an indigenous narrative mode. In this connection an excerpt from Marquez's Noble Prize acceptance speech will help to throw light on his objective.

I dare to think that it is this enormous reality ... A reality which is not of paper but which lives with us and determines each instant of our innumerable daily deaths and which sustains a flowing of insatiable creation full of wretchedness and beauty of which this errant and nostalgic Colombian is no more than just another number, distinguished by luck. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all the creatures of that outrageous reality, we have had very little to ask of the imagination, because the greatest challenge for us has been the insufficiency of conventional resources to make our life believable. This is, friends, the cure of our solitude.

This study has not attempted in any way to evaluate the authors under discussion or rate them as writers of narrative fiction. The point of interest of this article has been the exploration of the potential of a narrative writer and his mode of writing, whose full significance could only be realized in the light of another more established and more powerful writer of our time. The discussion may be concluded with the conjecture that the resemblance in the narrative styles of these two authors probably stems from the basic similarity in their experience of foreign dominion, while the divergence is rooted in the wide gap of time and the accompanying complexity of experience that separates them.

## NOTES

- 1 Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay, *Trailokyanather Granthabali* (Calcutta : Basumati Sahitya Mandir), II, p. 129. All translations from *Kankabati* are mine.
- 2 Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, trans. Gregory Rabassa, 9th ed. (1978 ; rpt. London : Pan Books Ltd., 1983), p. 195.
- 3 Plinio Apuleyo Mandoza, *The Fragrance of Guava* (Thetford, Norfolk : The Thetford Press Limited, 1983), p. 30.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- 6 *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, pp. 172-73.

# USE OF SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEME OF MARTYRDOM : ELIOT AND TAGORE A COMPARATIVE STUDY

MOHIT K. RAY

It is interesting to note certain similarities between the *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Natir Puja*, products as they are of two master minds of the present century. Both Eliot and Tagore, in their personal lives, had strong religious conviction in the will of God, although their faith found different expressions in their works. Eliot was a Catholic and had the highest regard for Christ. Tagore, on the other hand, was a Brahmo by birth and the Upaniṣads and the personality of the Buddha were the major influences on the philosophical background of his writings. The similarities between the teachings of the Buddha and Christ are obvious and need not be laboured. Both Eliot and Tagore had passed through the horror of the First World War and experienced the crisis of civilization. In one of his famous addresses delivered at the Calcutta Mahabodhi Society on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the Buddha, Tagore remarks :

কিছুদিন পূর্বেই পৃথিবীতে এক মহাযুদ্ধ হয়ে গেল। এক পক্ষের জয় হল, সে জয় বাহুবলের। কিন্তু যেহেতু বাহুবল মানুষের চরম বল নয়, এই জন্য মানুষের ইতিহাসে সে জয় নিষ্ফল হল, সে জয় নতুন যুদ্ধের বীজ বপন করে চলেছে। মানুষের শক্তি অক্রোধে, ক্ষমাতে, এই কথা বুঝতে দেয় না সেই পক্ষ যে আজও মানুষের মধ্যে মরে নি। তাই মানবের সত্যের প্রতি প্রজ্ঞা করে মানবের গুরু বলেছেন : ক্রোধকে জয় করবে অক্রোধের দ্বারা, নিজের ক্রোধকে এবং অন্যের ক্রোধকে। এ না হলে মানুষ ব্যর্থ হবে, কেহনু সে মানুষ।<sup>১</sup>

Historically, both *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Natir Puja* are enacted against the backdrop of a great national upheaval. The quarrel between the Papacy and the Crown shaped the subsequent history of Europe. In *Natir Puja* also we get glimpses of the great national upheaval that shook the country particularly in the spheres of religion and society after the advent of Buddhism. Bimbisāra was a contemporary of the Buddha. They met for the first time when Bimbisāra was thirty and the Buddha thirty-five. Bimbisāra was the founder of the ancient empire of Magadha and the epithet *śreṇika* given to him reflects his encouragement of trade and commerce, which was certainly a new development at that time.

Yuan Chawang credits him with the construction of roads and causeways which served as avenues for commerce as well. According to one historical version he was killed by his son, Ajātaśatru, who usurped the throne. According to another version Bimbisāra abdicated the throne in favour of Ajātaśatru and lived at a distance from the capital. Tagore

draws on both the versions. He accepts the abdication theory, because it helps him in glorifying the character of Bimbisāra in the light of the Buddhist doctrine of renunciation. He also subscribes to the idea of parricide, though in a modified form (সবাই অনুমান করছে, পথের মধ্যে ওরা নিপিন্দার মহারাজকে হত্যা করেছে। NP 68)<sup>3</sup> because it serves him well in revealing the violent and fanatic nature of Brahminism in contrast to the non-violent, pacifist Buddhism. Apart from Nanda's কী ভয়ংকর গর্জন! একি রাষ্ট্র-নিপ্পব? (NP 48)<sup>6</sup>, the character of Lokeswari voices the conflict between orthodox Brahminism and the liberal but austere Buddhism. She complains with intuitive feminine sentiment and impassioned human appeal:

এ ধর্মে মা ছেলের পক্ষে অনাবশ্যক; জীকে স্বামীর প্রয়োজন নেই। যারা না পুত্র না স্বামী না ভাই সেই সব বরছাড়াবাদের একটুখানি ভিক্ষা দেবার ক্ষমতা সমস্ত প্রাণকে শুকিয়ে ফেলে আমরা শূণ্য ঘরে পড়ে থাকব? মলিনতা, এই পুরুষের ধর্ম আমাদের মেরেছে, আমরাও একে মারব। (NP 37)<sup>4</sup>

Nor does Buddhism, according to her, allow a man to discharge his social responsibility:

অর্থপূত্র বিধিনার, ক্ষত্রিয় রাজা, রাজত্ব তো তাঁর ভোগের জিনিস নয়, তাতেই তাঁর ধর্মসাধনা। কিন্তু কোন্ মন্ত্রর ধর্ম কানে মন্ত্র দিন অমনি কত সহজেই রাজত্ব থেকে তিনি খসে পড়লেন—অস্ত্র হাতে না, রণক্ষেত্রে না, মৃত্যুর মুখে না। (NP 41)<sup>5</sup>

In *Murder in the Cathedral* the fundamental conflict is between the Papacy and the Crown, or more particularly, between the State and Religion. Tagore dramatizes the same kind of conflict in *Sacrifice*.<sup>6</sup> But in *Natir Puja* the conflict is between two religions—Brahminism and Buddhism—prescribing two sets of values which are not compatible.

In *Murder in the Cathedral*, towards the end of the play, the Knights directly address the audience, because Eliot wants to shock the audience into an awareness of the contemporary relevance of the situation. Tagore, however, does it subtly with the help of a song:

হিংসায় উন্মত্ত পৃথ্বী, নিত্য নিঠুর ঘন  
যোর কুটিল পঙ্খ তার লোভকুটিল বন্ধ। (NP 59)<sup>7</sup>

The Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* says:

I have smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened  
By subtle forebodings; (MC 53)

In *Natir Puja*, as well, death is looked at from different angles (মৃত্যুর সিংহাসার দিগ্বেদেই জন্মের অগ্নয়াত্রা। NP 53)<sup>8</sup>. In *Natir Puja* there is no Chorus, but the cluster of characters represented by Basabi, Nanda, Ratnavali, Ajita and Bhudra perform the role of the Chorus. They voice the popular reaction and confused feelings, and constantly comment on the action. These characters mark different stages of conflict, from direct

hostility to profound sympathy in regard to Buddhism. Both Eliot and Tagore use night as a very powerful symbol of spiritual darkness. The priest talks of "another night and another dawn", and the Chorus speaks of "the loneliness of the night of God" (MC 71), and also that "the darkness declares the glory of light" (MC 70). In *Natir Puja* the play opens early in the morning :

পূর্বগগনভাগে  
দীপ্ত হইল সুপ্রভাত  
ভরগারিণী রাগে । (NP 7)<sup>9</sup>

*Murder in the Cathedral* ends with the following lines invoking the spirit of Christ :

Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Blessed Thomas, pray for us. (MC 72)

And *Natir Puja* ends with the following lines :

বুদ্ধঃ সৰগং গচ্ছামি  
ধন্দ্বঃ সৰগং গচ্ছামি  
সংঘঃ সৰগং গচ্ছামি (NP 85)<sup>10</sup>

It is possible to point out many other similarities between *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Natir Puja* in terms of history, theme, organization and execution. The similarities, however, should not blind us to the vital differences between Eliot and Tagore vis-a-vis their use of source materials and the development of the theme of martyrdom.

## II

Eliot closely adheres to the eyewitness accounts of the murder of Thomas Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral* and concentrates on the "death and martyrdom". In Part II, the Chorus in deploring that "the peace of this world is always uncertain unless men keep the peace of God" (MC 41) harks back to Becket's Christmas sermon ("now think for a moment about the meaning of the word 'peace'") and reinforces the theme of martyrdom. And when the Chorus says that the "War among men defiles this world ; but death in the Lord renews it" the utterance becomes prophetic. The priests keep up the theme and dilate on it. The choric speech of the Knights closely adheres to and is a summary of the charges Reginald Fitzurse levels against Becket. He charges him with grave misconduct

and utter ingratitude towards the King. Becket's reply as given in one eyewitness account,

Non nego quin per me factum sit, sed supra me est, et meae  
prorsus non congruit dignitati, quos dominus papa ligavit  
absolvere. Ipsum adeant, in ejus redundat injuriam quod  
me et matrem suam ecclesiam Christi Canturiae Contemp-  
serunt<sup>11</sup>

becomes in Eliot's play

I do not deny  
That this was done through me. But it is not I  
Who can loose whom the Pope has bound.  
Let them go to him, upon whom rebounds  
Their contempt towards me, their contempt towards the Church  
shown. (MC 51)

Not merely modelled on the eyewitness account, but almost a free translation of it. The only significant change is that "matrem suam ecclesiam Christi Canturiae" (their mother, the church of Christ at Canterbury) has been replaced by "the Church". Significant, because it helps Eliot generalize the conflict which the play highlights. The conflict, only on the surface, is between Becket and Henry. Deep down, the conflict is between the Church and the State.

Again, when the panic-stricken priests enter the Cathedral and hasten to bar the doors of the church for personal safety Becket commands in the voice of thunder :

Ad quos conversus athleta mirabilis imperat ecclesiae januas aperiri, "Non decet"  
inquiens, "orationis domum, ecclesiam Christi, turrem facere. quae, etsi non  
claudatur, suis sufficit ad munimen ; et nos patiendo potius quam pugnando  
triumphabimus hostem, qui et pati venimus non repugnare."<sup>12</sup>

Eliot clearly sees that there are two issues involved in Becket's command to unbar the door : (i) it is not seemly to make a tower of the house of prayer, the church of Christ, and (ii) by suffering rather than by fighting can the clergy triumph over their adversary. Eliot uses both the issues, but separately, in two speeches of Becket. In the first speech Becket indicates,

I will not have the house of prayer, the church of Christ,  
The sanctuary, turned into a fortress. (MC 58)

The second speech provides the moral explanation :

Not to fight with beasts as men. We have fought the beast  
And have conquered. We have only to conquer  
Now, by suffering. (MC 59)

and asserts that the Law of God is "above the Law of Man".

Again, when the Knights accompanied by Hugh Mauclerc rush in with swords unsheathed they exclaim in a spirit of mad fury

Ubi est Thomas Beketh, proditor regis et regni ?<sup>13</sup>

And the first line in the address of the Knights is

Where is Becket, the traitor to the King ? (MC 60)

This is almost a literal translation of the eyewitness account. Becket's reply

I am here.

No traitor to the King. I am a priest. (MC 60)

literally translates the eyewitness account : "Ecce adsum, non regis proditor, sed sacerdos". By breaking this single sentence into three short sentences, Eliot has achieved a dramatic wonder. The short line, "I am here" with just three monosyllables, drives home Becket's undaunted demeanour, his supreme self-confidence, almost Promethean in dimension. "No traitor to the King" is an assured and emphatic rebuttal of the charge, and "I am a priest" is an assertion of his identity and the nature of his vocation.

Becket's last speech too is a verbal reconstruction of the eyewitness account according to which, bending his neck as though for prayer he joined his hands and raised them upward in supplication and commended his cause and the Church's cause to God, St. Mary and the martyr St. Denys. The account reads :

inclinata in modum orantis cervice, junctis pariter et elevatis sursum manibus,  
Deo et sanctae Mariae et beato martyri Dionysio suam et ecclesiae causam  
commendavit.<sup>14</sup>

### III

Coming back to Tagore, the story of Śrīmatī in the *Avadānaśataka* provides the source material for *Natir Puja*. But Tagore had written a poem, "Pujarini", on the same theme and drawing on the same material in 1899. "Pujarini" was recast in the dramatic form of *Natir Puja* in 1926.<sup>15</sup> While on the one hand it indicates Tagore's continuous interest in and reverence for Buddhism—the spirit of the Buddha, in fact, is invoked time and again in his poems, plays and songs—the change of form, from the



poetic to the dramatic, brings to a sharper focus the dramatic elements contained in the story. There is an obvious shift in the emphasis as well, from the martyr to martyrdom.

Interestingly, even while following the outline of the story Tagore significantly deviates from the source. In *Avadānaśataka* Śrīmatī acts on her own : “sā svakaṃ jīvitamagaṇayitvā Buddhaguṇāṃścānusmṛtya keśana-khastūpaṃ saṃmrjya dīpamālāmakarṣit ॥”<sup>16</sup> Śrīmatī, a devotee of the Buddha is undaunted by the fear of death. This speaks of her moral courage. But the courage is contaminated by chauvinistic insolence and egoism, and a flagrant transgression of authority inadequately motivated. The note of headstrong insolence is completely removed in the play where Srimati is *entrusted* with the task of worshipping by the Lord.

আজ বসন্তপূর্ণিমায় ভগবান বোধিসত্ত্বের জন্মোৎসব। অশোকবনে তাঁর আসনে পূজা-নিবেদনের ভার শ্রীমতীর উপর। (NP 32)<sup>17</sup>

And the bhikṣu Upali's instruction in the beginning of the play that she should offer her best (তোমার যা শ্রেষ্ঠ দান। NP 8) suggests the nature of the worship.

Another significant change that occurs in the play is the rejection of the episode of altercation between Ajātaśatru the King and Śrīmatī, a palace-maid. In *Avadānaśataka*, Ajātaśatru notices from the palace-top a row of lamps lighted on the stūpa. He wants to know who has lighted the lamps, and is told that Śrīmatī, a palace-maid, has done it. He then sends for Śrīmatī and asks her why she has transgressed the order of the King. Śrīmatī replies that although she has transgressed the order of the ruling king she has not violated – in fact, she has obeyed – the dictates of Bimbisārā, the pious king, or the real king.

yāvada jāstrurūpariprāsādatalagatastamudāramavabhāsaṃ dṛṣṭvā papraccha kimi-damiti । yāvadanyayā kathitaṃ Śrīmatyā keśanakhastūpe dīpamālā kṛteti ॥ tataḥ Śrīmatīmāhūya kathayati । kimarthaṃ rājaśāsanamatikramasīti ॥ sā kathayati । yadyapi mayā tava śāsanamatikrāntaṃ kiṃ tu dharmarājasya mayā Bimbisārasya śāsaṇaṃ nātikrāntamiti ॥<sup>18</sup>

The lines just quoted present Śrīmatī as an inspired votary of the Buddha no doubt. But at the same time the way she answers Ajātaśatru, shows her proud demeanour, though occasioned by the intensity of her devotion to the Buddha and high regard for Bimbisāra. This pride, albeit religious, has a touch of fanaticism and egoistic overtones. In the play, on the other hand, the dedication is achieved through gradual but determined self-effacement. The basic emotion that informs the character of Srimati

is not pride but humility. The change, therefore, has a direct bearing on the theme of martyrdom as envisioned by Tagore.

In the source, Śrīmatī is killed abruptly by Ajātaśatru who flies into rage at the insolence of the girl :

tatastena kupitena cakram kṣiptvā jivitād vyavaropitā 119

Reacting sharply to what he considers her audacity the King strikes her dead at once in a fit of fury. In the play Srimati is warned, time and again, by the guards ( রক্ষীগণ ) who also suffer from conflicting feelings and are half in sympathy<sup>30</sup> with Srimati before she is actually killed.

And the dance she performs at the stupa is at the instance of Ratnavali who has procured an order from the King to that effect to humiliate Srimati by compelling her to vilify the Buddhist shrine. In the source there is no mention of any dance. Śrīmatī, there, is only a palace-maid and not a court-dancer. The dance is Tagore's innovation. This dance which indirectly reveals the character of Ratnavali—her jealousy and rancour—gives Srimati an opportunity to offer her best to the Buddha in the form of the dance. The dance which begins on a materialistic plane ( পাতকিনী আপাদমস্তক অলংকার পরেছে । NP 77 )<sup>31</sup> ultimately transcends the mundane and reaches out to wider spiritual domains. The discarding of the ornaments and the gorgeous outer garments—one by one—and the gradual revelation of the nun's yellow robe ( ভিক্ষুণীর পীতবস্ত্র ) symbolically suggest the abandonment of the external to the revelation of the internal, rejection of appearance in favour of reality, and finally affirm the eternal truth : supremacy of spiritual complacency over carnal pleasures.

In *Avadānaśataka* after her death Śrīmatī becomes an angel :

atha Śrīmatī devakanyā samantayojanaṃ divya-  
prabhāmaṇḍalāvabhāṣita devasamītimupasaṃkrāntā 122

Tagore does not include this part of the legend in his play. One possible explanation is that while Tagore revered Buddhism and had the highest regard for the teachings of the Buddha, as a Brahmo he found it difficult to accept angelhood as part of the religious doctrine. But more importantly, the idea of Śrīmatī being transfigured after her death and becoming an angel is inimical to the theme of martyrdom as Tagore develops it. The faith in angelhood, a kind of reward for the services rendered on earth considerably minimizes the significance of the sacrifice. The drama, therefore, meaningfully ends with the death of Srimati and its effect on the characters around. The recitation of the Buddhist hymn ( বজ্র সঙ্গীত )

গচ্ছামি / ধম্মং সরণং গচ্ছামি / সংঘং-সরণং গচ্ছামি NP 85) by Ratnavali is an indication of the changes that are afoot.

#### IV

It would be evident from the foregoing discussion that in spite of many similarities between *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Natir Puja* there is a marked difference between Eliot and Tagore in their use of the source-material. While Eliot closely adheres to the source material, Tagore completely transmutes it so that the simple story of Śrīmatī is invested with a profound significance that encompasses the meanings of life and death and tackles the riddle of existence in very clear and unequivocal Buddhist terms. The story of *Avadānaśataka* provides only the starting point and that is precisely the point of departure, leading to an imaginative recreation of the story in a consummate dramatic form.

Becket, the former Chancellor to the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury is a person of towering personality and belongs to the highest stratum of society. Srimati, by contrast, is only a court-dancer (palace-maid in the source) and belongs to the lower stratum of society.

আমি যে অভাগী । প্রভুর ভিক্ষাপাত্র আমার দান কুণ্ঠিত হবে । (NP 8)<sup>23</sup>

In the beginning of the play she is acutely conscious of her low social status and therefore would not give the alms with her own hand but would call a princess instead. Tagore seems to be of the view that it is not necessary that a martyr must come from the higher strata of society commanding respect and adoration of the multitude. The greatness of martyrdom consists in the greatness of the vision and in realization of its value by the sacrifice of one's life, and by affecting a transvaluation of values. Unlike Srimati, Becket has to overcome the temptation of becoming a martyr<sup>24</sup> before he faces death boldly with matchless equanimity. Tagore while omitting the episode of direct confrontation with Ajatasatru for reasons already stated, retains the spirit. When Nanda points out that the road to the stupa is blocked because of the King's order (বোধ হচ্ছে রাজার নিষেধ । NP 47)<sup>25</sup> Srimati promptly retorts that there is, nevertheless, the sanction of the Lord (কিন্তু প্রভুর আদেশ আছে । NP 48)<sup>26</sup>, and again, when Bhadra asks whether Srimati will be able to get over the royal obstacle (রাজার বাধাও সরাতে পারবে ? NP 50)<sup>27</sup> Srimati replies with confident assurance that that is beyond the jurisdiction of the King (সেখানে রাজার রাজদণ্ড পৌঁছয় না । NP 50)<sup>28</sup>. The exclusion of the direct confrontation

but retention of the spirit—the courage of conviction and the moral strength—has a direct bearing on Tagore's idea of martyrdom.

In contrast to the majestic bearing and proud demeanour of Becket, the character of Srimati is marked by humility. In the beginning of the play she alone is awake ( এই পুরীতে আছ একা কেবল তুমিই জেগে ? NP 7 ).<sup>80</sup> Metaphorically she alone is in readiness to receive the message of the Buddha. Throughout the play, day and night, light and darkness, sleep and wakeful state are charged with symbolic significance ( সহসা নবীন উষা আসে হাতে আলোকের ঝারি, / দেয় সাড়া ঘন অন্ধকারে । NP 31<sup>80</sup> ; যে ঘোর আলো লুকিয়ে আছে / রাতের পারে / আমায় দেখতে দাও । NP 54<sup>81</sup> )

Once awakened, Srimati by her sincerity and devotion transcends her own social standing and vindicates the majesty of her spirit. Her glory consists in her ability to rise above her social status by drawing sustenance from the soul, and dedicate herself to the will of the Buddha. In this connection Tagore writes :

জীবনের যেটা চরম তাৎপর্য, যা তার নিহিতার্থ, বাইরে যা ক্রমাগত পরিণামের দিকে রূপ নিচ্ছে তাকে বুঝতে পারছি সে তার প্রাণস্থ প্রাণ, সে প্রাণের অন্তরতর প্রাণ ... প্রেরণা অনুসারে প্রত্যেক মানুষের পথের মূল্যগৌরব স্বতন্ত্র । 'নটীর পূজা' নাটকীয় এই কথাটাই বলবার চেষ্টা করেছি । বুদ্ধদেবকে নটী যে অর্ঘ্য দান করতে চেয়েছিল সে তার নৃত্য । অশ্রু সাধকেরা তাঁকে দিয়েছিল যা ছিল তাদেরই অন্তরতর সত্য, নটী দিয়েছে তার সমস্ত জীবনের অভিব্যক্ত সত্যকে । মৃত্যু দিয়ে সেই সত্যের চরম মূল্য প্রমাণ করেছে । এই নৃত্যকে পরিপূর্ণ করে জাগিয়ে তুলেছিল তার প্রাণমনের মধ্যে তার প্রাণের প্রাণ ।<sup>82</sup>

The distinction that Tagore makes between the sacrifice of other disciples and that of Srimati ( অশ্রু সাধকেরা তাঁকে দিয়েছিল যা ছিল তাদেরই অন্তরতর সত্য, নটী দিয়েছে তার সমস্ত জীবনের অভিব্যক্ত সত্যকে । ) epitomizes the difference between Becket and Srimati as martyrs. The way Tagore has given a new dimension to the concept of martyrdom through his delineation of the character of Srimati within the framework of the play is really remarkable.<sup>83</sup> Though *Natir Puja* is not a dance drama, the dance of the Nati constitutes the essence of this drama.<sup>84</sup> From the very beginning the whole drama inevitably moves towards this final dance when the simple devotion of Srimati is gradually worked up and heightened to a pitch of extra-ordinary richness and splendour culminating in the death of Srimati.<sup>85</sup> The dance of Srimati functions as the objective correlative for Tagore's idea of martyrdom.\*

\* I am grateful to my colleague, Dr Mihir Kumar Sen, for suggesting the topic. I am also indebted to Professor Venkata Ramanan and Professor Prabodh Chandra Sen of Santiniketan for their valuable suggestions.

REFERENCES 1 *Murder in the Cathedral* (subsequently referred to as MC) : First published in 1935. All the references are to the April 1961 impression of the Faber and Faber edition.

2 *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*. Ed. by James C. Robertson and for Vol VII J.C. Robertson and J.B. Shepperd. 7 Vols. Rolls series 1875-85. Subsequently referred to as *Materials*.

3 *Natir Puja* : First published in 1926. All references are to the 1981 reprint by the Visva-Bharati. Subsequently referred to as *NP*.

4 *Avadānaśataka* : Ed. by J.S. Speyer. Photomechanic reprint 1958.

5 K.R. Kripalani : “*Natir Puja* : An Appreciation”, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (April, 1943).

6 Pramathanath Bishi : *Rabindranatyaprabaha*, Calcutta, 1966.

7 K.P. Jayaswal : *Imperial History of India in a Sanskrit Text*, Calcutta, 1934.

8 Sudhakar Chattopadhyay : *Bimbisara to Asoke*, Calcutta, 1977.

9 R.L. Mitra : *Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal*, rpt., Calcutta, 1973.

## NOTES

English renderings of the excerpts from *Natir Puja* are based on Marjorie Sykes's translation of *Natir Puja* published as “The Dancing Girl's Worship” in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol V. 1927. Passages left out by Marjorie Sykes are translated into English by the present author.

1 *Rabindra Rachanavali*, Govt. of West Bengal, 1961, Vol 11, p. 472 :

“The world saw the end of a terrible war the other day. The victory that crowned one group of belligerents was victory of armed might ; but because brute force is not man's supreme source of strength, that victory has proved unfruitful and is only sowing the seeds of fresh dissension. Man's strength lies in mercy and compassion. The brute in man that has not yet perished does not allow him to realize this truth to which the Master paid homage when he said that all anger, whether one's own or of others, must be conquered by non-anger. Unless man follows this injunction his life is bound to be a failure.” (trans. Somnath Maitra)

2 “People say that Maharaja Bimbisara has been murdered on his way to the capital.”

3 “Hark ! That terrible tumult ! Can it be a revolt ?”

4 “I have realized it today, Mallika, that this is a man's religion. In it the woman is nowhere—the son has no need of his mother, the husband no need of his wife. And yet, in order to give alms to these begging bhikshus—neither sons, husbands, nor brothers, forsakers of their homes—we must cling to *our* empty homes with withered lives ! This man's religion has destroyed us : We must destroy it.”

5. “My husband, Bimbisara, once a khastriya king, held his kingship as a religious duty, not as a means of self-enjoyment. But a voice like the scorching desert wind touched his ours, and as a dead leaf he dropped from his throne,—not with arms in hand, not in the battlefield, nor to meet his death.”

6 The conflict between Govindamanikya and Raghupati is, essentially, a conflict between the State and the Religion, between two sets of values which are not compatible. Tagore, of course, has woven a number of other strands—violence versus non-violence, magnanimity versus meanness, truth versus falsehood—into the thematic pattern of the play. But the play remains, at bottom, a study in conflict between the State and the Religion for supremacy of power.

7 "The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred, / The conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish, / Crooked are its path, tangled its bonds of greed ..."

8 "The triumphant procession of the New Birth passes through the gate of death."

9 "The eastern sky is flushed at dawn by the aura of the rising sun." (translation mine) In a similar way "the morning slowly breaks" in *Prometheus Unbound* suggests the end of the darkness of Prometheus's soul.

10 "My refuge is in the Buddha, / My refuge is in the Dharma, / My refuge is in the Sangha."

11 *Materials*, Vol II, p. 432.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 435.

13 *Idem.*

14 *Ibid.*, p. 437.

15 The immediate occasion, however, was casual. On his return from a two-month tour in East Bengal he finds (March 1926) that preparations are going on at Santiniketan to present a dumb-show of "Pujarini" as part of the birthday celebrations of the poet. Tagore at once decides to dramatize the poem. The result is *Natir Puja*. But the occasional need is subservient to the impelling aesthetic need, as it would be evident from a letter of Tagore (written to Pramatha Chaudhuri). Tagore writes: "I started writing under a pressure. But now the internal pressure (the demand of art—author) has surpassed the external pressure." The internal pressure is due to the dramatic form inhering the theme.

16 *Avadānuśataka*, p. 308.

17 "This is the birthday of our Lord, the night of the full-moon of spring, and it will be Srimati's duty this evening to place the offerings on His altar beneath the Asoka tree."

18 *Avadānaśataka*, p. 309.

19 *Idem.*

20 Partly like Mercury in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*.

21 "The shameless sinner has decorated her whole body with ornaments." (translation mine)

22 *Avadānaśataka*, p. 309.

23 "Alas, Sir, I am but an unfortunate creature. Any offering of mine will be shamed amidst the alms gathered for the Lord."

24 I am indebted to Sri Phanindra Kumar Mitra of Kalyani University for calling my attention to this point of difference between Becket and Srimati as martyrs.

25 "Does it not mean that our passage is forbidden by the King?"

26 "But we have our Master's order."

27 "Can you thrust aside the King's own barrier?"

28 "The King's sceptre cannot reach the shrine."

29 "Are you alone awake in this palace?" (translation mine)

30 "Suddenly the young dawn appears with a basket of light and dispels the dense darkness." (translation mine)

31 "Please allow me to see the light of my own which lies hidden in the depth of night. Please allow me to see my real self which lies hidden in thee." (translation mine)

32 *Atmaparichay*, 1940, pp. 97-98 :

"I can now realize the ultimate significance of life, the central motif that constantly moves towards the final shape. This constitutes the life of life, the innermost recess, the core of the heart.... Depending on inspiration every one has his own individual way and valuation of life. I have tried to say that much in the playlet, *Natir Puja*. What the Nati wanted to offer to the Buddha was her dance. Other disciples offered only the deeply felt truth. But the Nati offered the whole truth manifest in her life. By paying the price of life she only proved how extremely precious that truth was. The deepest urge found the fullest expression in her dance." (translation mine)

33 It should be remembered that in the orthodox form Buddhism does not admit of martyrdom. It is only in its later developments such as the *Mahayana* that we find some form of saint-worship recognized.

34 Cf. Pramathanath Bishi : *Rubindranatyaprabaha*, Vol 1, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 91-92.

35 The orgy of her dance as an expression of the agitation caused by her realization of truth is comparable in some respects with "Nirjharer Swapnabhanga".

## POETIC IDENTITY AND THE CRISIS OF VOCATION

C. SUBBA RAO

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In the prefaces to great kavyas in our literature, there is the convention of invoking the grace of God to inspire the poet to successfully complete the task of writing. In Telugu this literary convention goes by the name of *avatarika* ; it is a prayer set in the beginning of the work and it is supposed to cause divinity to descend from heaven ; it is also defined as a preface or introduction. We are reminded here of the western literary convention of invocation to the Muses. It is time-honoured and is a common feature in classical, medieval and even modern writings.

Unlike the Sanskrit poet who invariably starts with a "Mangala Śloka" the Telugu poet appears to have refined this convention to include general observations relating to the past masters of the word, his precursors, one's own guru and contemporary poets good and bad. Further he adds a few dedicatory verses also in conclusion. In this process the poet makes a programmatic statement about his own hopes and aspirations vis-a-vis the precursor. Very frequently it takes the form of thanksgiving to the hallowed tradition of poets by invoking the "familiar compound ghost", as it were. For the literary historian, the *avatarika* offers a number of details about the period, poets and patrons etc. The Telugu critic depends, rather heavily on occasion, on the self-referential verses of the poet, his intention in writing the epic and so on.

A study of the implications of this convention, offers revealing insights into the problematic relationship between the precursor and the successor. It would also suggest the degree of self-consciousness the poet possesses, his self-confidence and his awe or anxiety in relation to the past masters.

The first poet Nannaya wrote a trend-setting preface where, in addition to the invocation to the divine, he talked in a self-referential vein about his vocation as poet and the qualities of his poetry. Very frequently commentaries on Nannaya accept without question this summary and bring out applied criticism. The second Bharata poet narrates a dream sequence in which the god-head encourages him to embark upon writing the *Mahabharata*. He refers to his precursor Nannaya while making a self-confident statement about the stupendous task of rendering fifteen parvas into Telugu. There is very little to suggest in these *avatarikas* any trace of self-consciousness or anxiety on the part of these poets. As yet the question of the burden of the past was not an issue which troubled



these poets. Each poet could be identified by the unique inflection of his poetic voice, the one primarily narrative and the other pronouncedly dramatic.

The poet who rendered the *Bhāgavata* into Telugu was grateful for the fact that his precursors left untouched this particular work. He considered it his good fortune and took upon himself this task to work out his salvation. He could discover his poetic identity and voice without being obliged to enter into an oedipal engagement with another Telugu poet. Potana is a master of melody and sweetness in verse. His narrative is marked by a "linked sweetness long drawn out". His uniqueness is manifest in the striking departures he makes from the prevailing strains of his poetic precursors. Although it would be far-fetched to suggest that he suffers a crisis of vocation, yet it would not be improper to claim that he is more self-conscious about his task of writing than the earlier poets. This strain of self-consciousness becomes more pronounced in the *prabandha* period when a Surana details a number of poetic commonplaces only to dismiss them with contempt. "Wouldn't you be ashamed of using such patently artificial figures of speech?" He asks. The *prabandha* poet does worry over the question of the strength or the weakness of a literary convention. He shows an awareness of the need to deviate from the prevailing norms of his precursors in order to discover his poetic identity. It is but natural that a *prabandha* poet should show a sense of 'belatedness'. But as yet the past masters are invoked without a sense of anxiety. There is a touch of awe and veneration. It is always the heritage of the past that is cherished and never the burden that is disdained. In this tradition one must make special mention of a modern poet who wrote distinguished metrical poetry called Viswanatha. Here is the example of a proud poet — our last romantic — who attempted the *Ramayana* in Telugu. Belated, one is tempted to say. He himself raises the question in self-regarding irony : why *Ramayana* ? Haven't we had enough of it ? Proud but not vain, he says : why the same food every day ? the same dailiness of living ? He convenes in the root meaning of that fine word, brings together the entire gamut of voices, of precursors in Telugu. And in their presence the poet is undaunted, and if anything, he would like to offer a plenary *naivedya* of all the poetic resources potentially available with the Telugu Muse.

It is not surprising that Viswanatha's literary self-consciousness should be acute as he is fated to discover his poetic identity within a hallowed

tradition reaching back across the years to Nannaya and further back to Vālmiki himself. In Viswanatha's masterly conceit, there is only one real poet and that is Vālmiki. So in his *avatarika* he did not have to criticize the *kukavi*. He maintains that the saintly Vālmiki has put us all in everlasting linguistic debt to redeem which even a number of *janmas* would be inadequate. The first poet Nannaya, the *adikavi*, is for Viswanatha a second Vālmiki. He includes all the prominent poets in Telugu in his roll call of honour, each with a significant phrase.

The problem of one's relationship to the tradition of poetic conventions and writing acquires a special force and relevance in the modern period. In the traditional poets writing in metre, we find an implicit acceptance of the rules of *alamkara*. In the early decades of this century, the twin poets Pingali and Katuri wrote a short piece called *Kavita Samagri*. We see a pedlar of poetic paraphernalia being accosted by a would-be poet. The dialogue that ensues between the two throws into relief the entire question of metrical conventions and the properties of poetry. Whereas the would-be poet seeks metrical *mantras*, the hawker offers to sell the sun-set, the dew, the moon and the lotus. There is a clear shift of focus here from concerns with rhetoric and metre to certain properties that constitute poetry.

This shift acquires a meaningful, revolutionary strain in the hands of the modern poet Sri Sri. The early American poet, Whitman, wanted to rescue poetry from the dead weight of the English Iambus. In a similar fashion, Sri Sri seeks freedom from the suffocating and seductive forms of the metrical muse. The convention of the *avatarika* undergoes a transformation in the hands of Sri Sri. Sri Sri's "Kavita ! O Kavita !" is a programmatic piece comparable to great romantic poems in which the poet declares his intention to take up the vocation of poetry. It is an invocation to the Muse, a convention observed both in the East and the West, by the romantic as well as classical poets. It involves at once a trial, an attempt at self-definition, finally leading to the discovery of the poet's identity, his poetic *swadharma*. In the case of Sri Sri it looks as though his quest for *swadharma* forced him to explore *kaladharmā*, the *Zeitgeist*. His creative response to *kaladharmā* leads him to the discovery of his poetic *swadharma*. The discovery is all the more valuable to the Telugu Muse because Sri Sri's encounter with the Western Muse, ideology etc acted as a catalyst in intensifying his search for an authentic voice. He was incubating, as it were, the spirit of the times as much as any one

else in far-flung Madras in the thirties. Small wonder he is called the Vaitalika, the herald of the Modern Telugu Muse.

If Viswanatha engages his precursors in a long drawn-out epic duel in the *Ramayana* observing the rules of the game, Sri Sri offers to liberate himself from the fetters of *vyakarana*, the serpentine embrace of *chhandas* and the graveyard of dictionaries. It is legitimate to bring in the crisis of vocation in the case of this modern poet who would discover his poetic identity in a productive tension with what all along has been considered poetic and sacred. We witness the birth of a new poet and the discovery of his *na nudi*, his voice and inflexion. In the opening lines the poet's quest for the muse is frustrated by *alamkara maya*; the muse appears like a will-o-the-wisp. In the second verse paragraph the poet enters into a *nischala samadhi* in which he suffers an epiphanic *sakshatkara* of the *viswarupa* of the Muse. We are led on a crescendo of apocalyptic images in which the poet becomes self-begotten, crosses the threshold, and sings his song.

It is obvious from the foregoing that the career of any strong poet is characterized, among other things, by a trial involving self-definition. The greater the poet the more aware is he of the need for self-justification. "The conventions at his disposal do not lessen the agony of self-election: if he admires the ancients, he trembles to rival them; if he does not admire, he trembles before a void he must fill." (Hartman: *Beyond Formalism*, p. 368) Not only the individual poet but sometimes a whole group of poets may be seen sharply reaching to the norms of earlier writing in their manifestos in the modern era. In the past decade and a half in Telugu, more than two or three significant manifestos have appeared—the manifesto of the Digambara poets, the Virasam manifesto, and the Kavisena manifesto. We find in all this the problematic relationship between *traditio* and *transitio*—a self-conscious awareness of the burden of the past leading to the preoccupation with transition.

## RESEARCH NOTE

A Note on Raj Lakshmi Debi's *The Hindu Wife or the Enchanted Fruit* published in the year 1876

K.S. RAMAMURTI

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While a great deal of work has been done in the Indo-Anglian fiction of the post-Independence period, very little attention has been paid to some of the earlier works, the novels and short stories of the pioneers and forerunners. Some of the really good novels of the 19th century which are worthy of serious attention and study, have been dismissed as museum pieces which are only of historical interest, and they have been victims of easy generalizations based on hasty or superficial study. This apart, there are also instances of erratic and misleading bibliographical entries and 'critical' comments being made in respect of some of the works of the 19th century writers. Entries and critical notes relating to a particular work bearing the title *The Hindu Wife or the Enchanted Fruit* make interesting reading from this point of view.

*The Hindu Wife or the Enchanted Fruit* by Raj Lakshmi Debi is a long tale in verse, a narrative poem telling us a heroic tale in verses which strike us all at once as an imitation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. But this work in verse has been called and discussed as a novel by more writers than one. Professor P.P. Mehta calls it a novel, "a flimsy novel written in a very antiquated style"<sup>1</sup> and makes another interesting observation in which reference is made to this 'novel' :

Then we come to the third outstanding fact about these novels. They contain an extraordinary mixture of strength and weakness. Most of the novels are mediocre and some like *The Hindu Wife* are downright bad. Every one of them is deformed by false sentiments, melodrama and wooden characters.

Even Dr K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar refers to it as a novel in his *Indian Writing in English*<sup>2</sup> as also in his *Indian Contribution to English Literature*. (Similarly Professor Mehta's observations on Toru Dutt's *Bianca* show no evidence of his having known that it was only an unfinished fragment.)

What is much more interesting than Professor Mehta's observations is the fact that *The Enchanted Fruit or Hindu Wife* has been discussed as a poem written by Sir William Jones. The following extracts from *Sir William Jones : The Bicentenary of his Birth Commemoration Volume* (Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1948) make interesting reading :

The poems on which Sir William's position among Indo-Anglian literary men must be judged are *The Enchanted Fruit or Hindu Wife*, a number of translations

from the Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, chief among which is a translation of Sakuntala. (Satyendranath Ray on Sir William Jones's Poetry, p. 22)

*The Enchanted Fruit*, the longest of Jones's strictly Anglo-Indian original poems is what the poet himself calls an "ante-diluvian" tale. (S.N. Ray, p. 23 in the same volume)

All these observations, interesting as they are, confirm the fact that *The Enchanted Fruit* is a poem and not a novel even if they do not help us determine the truth about its real authorship.

The writer of this note succeeded in ruling out the possibility of there being two works under the same title by two different writers by getting access to the copies of the same work in about five libraries including the National Library, Calcutta, the Rammohan Library, Calcutta, the Bombay University library and the Kerala University library. This interesting discovery was made when the writer was working on his doctoral dissertation on *The Rise of the Indian Novel in English* and was searching for books and material needed for his work. The significance of some small discoveries like this lies in the fact that they confirm the view that while more than justice is sought to be done to the works of the post-Independence Indo-Anglian writers, the attention paid to the writers of the earlier periods is not only scanty and perfunctory but even superficial and erratic. The doctoral dissertation referred to above has, among other things, succeeded in redeeming many good novels of the earlier periods from neglect and obsolescence and putting them in a truer perspective.

#### NOTES

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1 P.P. Mehta, *Indo-Anglian Fiction : An Assessment* (Bareilly : Prakash Book Depot, 1968), pp. 37-38.

2 K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* (Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1973), p. 436 and p. 725.

## REPRINT

A lecture by Benoy Kumar Sarkar in 1910 at Maldah, Bengal, located from old records by Swapan Majumdar and reprinted here by the kind permission of the National Library, Calcutta.

### THE MAN OF LETTERS

#### A SCHEME FOR FOSTERING INDIAN VERNACULAR LITERATURES

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So there has been a literary conference at Maldah also. In this way through industrial, literary and political movements our small and backward places are being made parts of a great whole. A new national life is thus being created and superseding the old communal life of the village.

The unity we have been gradually realising is altogether a new feature of Indian life. There is no doubt that we have had always principles of unity and harmony in the midst of the thousand and one diversities of our social and religious life. But the condition we are approaching through the influence of Western political ideas and English education is the unity of political life – nationality.

Having come into contact with the Western civilisation we have discovered, as it were, our indigenous culture and got an insight into our own life. The English people have *made* India, so to speak, and have created opportunities for the Indians to seek their proper place in the scheme of nations.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century, when, in the interests of their commerce, the Europeans were compelled to seek, and succeeded in finding out new routes to India—their achievements were looked upon as mere geographical discoveries. The history of Europe during the next three centuries is the record of a struggle for world power and colonial supremacy; and gradually India was drawn into the whirlpool of the European struggle for existence. The great consummation of the momentous series of conflicts has been the foundation of the British Empire and the subjection of India. Historically considered, this dependence fully deserves the whole-hearted thankfulness of the Indians. For it is through this subjection to a foreign power that India has been able to discover her own soul. The accidental geographical discovery of a distant country has thus been a stepping stone to the self-realisation of one of the races of humanity.

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We have retained the author's spelling for the sake of history. — Editor

Whoever will take a long and large view of matters will feel that Western education has not in any way been harmful to our society. On the contrary, it is contact with Europe that has given us all those features of our national life which we respect so much and feel glory in today.

Whatever might have been the motives with which English education was introduced into our country, and whatever might have been the reception first accorded to the features of Western civilisation by our society, — there is no use denying the fact today that our society has been progressing in all departments ever since we have acquired the fitness sufficient to enable us to assimilate with our peculiar national existence, the scientific spirit, ideas of constitutional self-government, political unity and other aspects of Western life. We have been able to organise independently institutions like the Indian National Congress, the Science Association, the Sahitya Parishad, the National Council of Education and the Association for the Scientific and Industrial Education of Indians. Our movements in the fields of thought and activity have reached not only the departments of industry, literature and science, but are also influencing our education, society, and religion. Our life is manifesting itself in diverse ways.

Even the ideas of self-sacrifice, renunciation, *vairagya*, philanthropy, service to mankind, those moral and spiritual truths which we have of late been trying to realise in our life, our efforts at relieving the distress of others and doing good to fellowmen — all these are really the fruits of Western education. These teachings of the ancient Upanishads and the Vedanta we have got in a new shape from Europe, and this has given an impulse to our propagation of the truths of the *Gita*, the study of metaphysics and the consecration of our lives to some selfless mission. Our modern *sannyasis* and *karmayogis* are really the students and disciples of European *Rishis* like Goethe, Carlyle, Emerson, Ruskin and Tolstoy. Since the French Revolutionary epoch, owing to the conjuncture of several circumstances, a reaction has set in in Europe to the *ancien régime* of her thought and life ; and she has begun to acquire democratic and socialistic ideas, such as equality, fraternity, liberty of thought, assertion of individuality, highest self realisation, and the rights of the proletariat. The result has been a comprehensive and all-embracing movement in the literature, economic life, religion and morals of Europe which has been the cause of an *Aufklärung* and a renaissance by introducing into the cast of European thought, elements of idealism, spirituality, other-worldliness

and transcendentalism. This supersensualism of the Romantic outburst in Europe is the direct fountain-head of our present-day Vedantic movements in India.

The admission of the fact that India is indebted to Europe is not a disparagement of Indian civilisation ; for the world's culture develops itself through such mutual intercourse. In olden days the Indians discovered certain truths and contributed them to the fund of human civilisation. In modern times Europe has approached mankind with a present of certain new ideas. Egypt, Babylon, Greece and other states of antiquity have become extinct in the process of their giving light to the world. They are nowhere now to use the modern ideas in their own way and to contribute to the world's richness by making something out of them. But ancient India having borne a peculiar immortal life is still existing, and is making arrangements for the opening up of a new chapter in the history of human civilisation by Indianising the truths of the modern world. Modern Greece, modern Egypt bear no testimony to their ancient national life and culture ; but modern India is keeping up the traditions of her old life even after Europeanisation. India is, in fact, the meeting ground of the ancient and the modern, the Eastern and the Western ; and the great synthesis that is evolving itself at this confluence of the world-forces is neither a transfer to the Indian stage of the acting of Europe nor a mere repetition of antique Ind. In this India is displaying her new capacities and energies in novel forms, manifesting herself in a new shape suited to the new age.

To prove that India does not present the case of an arrested growth, and that our national life has not been petrified into an insensible fossil imbedded in the lower strata of human civilisation, we need only consider the fact that in the process of assimilating the new conditions and adapting ourselves to the environment we have not lost our separate existence, our individuality. We have, in fact, been able to use the world-forces according to the needs of our proper development ; and the new type of life that is growing within us as a result of this assimilation is manifesting itself in the creation of a new literature. Under the influence of the new ideas and forces we have been vitalised into being, and have got possession of the special characteristics of the living peoples, *e.g.*, the wealth of a language and a literature. And this is a possession which enables man to realise his separateness from the mere animal, which differentiates nation from nation by developing the national individualities.



This gives rise to forces which in the Middle Ages were sufficient to start the peoples of the modern world along independent national lines, which in recent times have been the cause of a revolution which has shaken the French State to its roots, and which have been able to enlighten and illumine the minds of the Poles and keep them up even after the demolition of their national existence by the triple partition of their territory. Such forces as these we have acquired, and our language has been growing in complexity and our literature becoming fuller and richer. We have certainly had in our nature sufficient strength and elements of fitness to use the new ideas, express the new life and embody the new desires.

The mark of a living people is its growth and development along the lines of its traditional character, its own historic individuality. History tends to evolve through nations, their peculiar natures, and develops their natural aptitudes and characteristics. And so the existence and growth of a language suited to the nature and expressing the ideas and aspirations of a people is the sign and test of the existence and growth of national life. There can exist no national life without a *national* language. Where we fail to perceive the signs of a special language there we are sure not to find a separate national existence. It is because of this that in the modern world we find a very prominent position given to the national languages and literatures in the schemes of education. In the systems of national education in all countries we find an effort to familiarise the pupils with the national traditions and the various features of national life ; and to use the national languages as the mediums of instructions even in the highest stages of education. National language and national literature are, in fact, the basic foundations of a real national education.

Those of our countrymen, therefore, who want to inaugurate a new type of education adjusted to the new conditions of life and have been attempting to qualify us for the solution of modern problems, have a double function to discharge. In the first place, they have to make arrangements for scientific, industrial and commercial education in order to equip society with the means of supplying its needs according to modern methods. In the second place they have to make arrangements by which the national language can be used as the medium of instruction in all subjects from the primary and free night schools in the highest educational institutions. Our educational system cannot be natural and really national until and unless our mother tongue is used in all the stages of our educational life. It is on the development of national literature

that the progress and success of national schools depend. National education cannot strike its roots deep into our soil solely on the strength of a permanent "local habitation" or the establishment of a new Council. Those who have devoted themselves to the development of the vernacular languages and literatures are laying the real foundations of national education in the country. It is these men of letters and educational missionaries who are in reality the pioneers and makers of the future national University of India.

Our literature is still in its insignificant nonage. There is no doubt that our language has within a short time displayed its capacity by growing in expressiveness and complexity ; but our literature cannot as yet be used in the highest classes of an advanced University. Consequently our mother-tongue has been awarded the position of a second language in the Government scheme of higher education and has not been entitled to the dignity of the first language ; and it is because of this backwardness of our language and literature that the aims and efforts of the National Council of Education have been futile and abortive and may be ranked among the class of "pious wishes."

Stripped of poetry, fiction and tales, our literature has very little worth the name. A beginning has just been made, so to speak, in the study of antiquities ; but our national literature bears no trace of work on the historico-comparative method. It would not be an exaggeration to remark that the science of criticism has not yet been introduced in our literature. Our monthlies have of late been displaying a taste for scientific essays. Translations from foreign poetical literature are few and far between. We have a vanity that we are a nation of philosophers, but of high class philosophical dissertations our literature has very little. We can easily estimate the poverty and slenderness of our literature if we just compare it with that of those peoples among whom the mother tongue occupies the first place in the scheme of education. But there are signs of hope everywhere. People have become alive to the need of diffusion of learning through mass education and female education. A desire for the cultivation of letters, the study of the country's past, and the collection of materials for history is being evinced by all classes of the community, rich and poor, educated as well as illiterate ; the reading public has been enlarged and a general demand for knowledge and education has been created in the community. We are, in fact, on the threshold of an extensive thought-movement and a vast literary outburst.

In order that we may help forward this process of intellectual revolution which is destined to bear rich fruit for us in the immediate future, there is but one duty for all our literary men in the present. The sole cry they have to take up is—IN WHAT WAY AND IN HOW MANY YEARS CAN OUR LITERATURE OCCUPY THE POSITION OF FRENCH, GERMAN AND ENGLISH FOR THE STUDY OF SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY AND OTHER SERIOUS SUBJECTS IN THE HIGHEST CLASSES OF A UNIVERSITY. The efforts and activities of our men of letters have to be regulated in such a way as to focus our whole literary devotion on the realisation of this single object.

But a question many arise as to the possibility of thus consciously developing a literature by artificial means. First, it is generally believed that language and literature are natural institutions. Their growth and development are similar to those of plants and other natural objects and can not be controlled by the will of man. They are not *made*, but they *grow*.

Undoubtedly, the growth and development of religion, state, society, language, literature and other human institutions depend on the growth and progress of the character of man. These features of human life can not transcend the limits of the general culture attained by him. In order that he may be fit for an advanced religion, a scientific polity and a well developed society, he must have to elevate his own nature and develop his own powers. Regulations regarding these can not be made except with reference to the peculiar conditions and the particular stage of a people's existence; and so ordinances enjoining or prohibiting self-government, liberty of thought and discussion, free-trade, worship of images or of the Formless One, and the like, are based on the historically developed characteristics of a people. But it is a matter of commonplace observation that wants and desires can be created through persistent efforts and activities. In all matters physical, spiritual, domestic as well as political, there is an intimate connection between demand and supply. If somebody is sincerely convinced of a need and if with perseverance one can make his ideas filter through various strata of society, his ideas and aspirations can ultimately permeate the community and become the ideal of the whole people. Constantly talking and thinking of a want, men begin to *feel* that want. Under the influence of this creation of new wants many advanced nations have fallen low and many half educated and semi-savage societies have acquired the fitness for adopting the institutions of civilised life. The individual or the people that is today quite unfit for some social, political, industrial or religious institutions, may tomorrow be possessed by

such an inveterate desire for them as can give them the necessary qualification. On the other hand, the intelligent, skilled and God-fearing individual or nation of today may under the influence of new conditions become degraded and lifeless in no time. In the history of the world the records of the growth and decay of industry and commerce, the propagation and decline of religions, the rise and fall of states and the development and decadence of literature bear ample testimony to the conscious creation of new ideas and wants and the art of subjection and demoralisation.

The fact is, man can make progress by perseverance and efforts and may be degraded under the influence of adverse circumstances. The industry and commerce of Spain were ruined by such unfavourable activities. The history of economic life in England teaches that the prosperity of British industry and commerce was founded by the efforts of princes and patriots who tried to advance the country's interests by the adoption of the policy of protection. It was this protective policy again which guided the efforts of the Roman Emperors in their attempt at elevating their capital city from a rude, insignificant condition to the position of the metropolis of the educational world. It was this that underlay their imperialism which effected an intellectual centralisation by destroying the glory and prestige of the universities of ancient Hellas. The all round prosperity of Alexandria was due to such conscious efforts of responsible men. The development of industry and commerce as well as the spread of education in Russia were regulated by such a policy of the conscious creation of new wants. All religions that have been promulgated and all attempts at the renovation of religion by removing superstitious and meaningless practices, all religious revolutions and reformations are the results of the growth of new ideas and aspirations. It was through the preaching of a new idea that the institution of slavery has become a thing of the past in the civilised world. Prussia has acquired a high place in international diplomacy and the polity of European states by adopting the features of an advanced constitution. Religious preachers and social reformers have succeeded in endowing many illiterate, barbarous and half-educated peoples with civilisation, culture and literature in the very process of imparting to them their special ideals.

Language is a mere instrument for the expression and interchange of thoughts. A proper use of the ways and means by which man gives expression to his wants and aspirations leads to the enrichment of his language. The wealth and variety of a language depend on the variety and

copiousness of these methods and means. Again the soul of literature is the thoughts and ideas embodied therein. And therefore the richness, variety and complexity of a literature can grow only with the growth in variety and complexity of man's thoughts and desires. The enrichment of literature, therefore, depends on the conditions which enrich the mind and make it the storehouse of thoughts and ideas.

It is the actual life of man, the part played by him on this world's stage that is the cause of all thoughts and ideas, and therefore these can grow in copiousness and variety only with the variety, width, and depth of life. In order, therefore, that a language and literature may be enriched and made flourishing the prime necessity and precondition is to make the actual life complex, eventful and momentous in various ways. A language can not display its potentialities and a literature can not become vast, extensive and impetuous unless the political, social, and individual life of man is agitated by conscious activities and becomes all-reaching, comprehensive and all-grasping.

In the interests of the full development of the national language and literatures of India it is necessary that the lives of the inhabitants of its various provinces should be eventful and as full of diversities and varieties of functions as possible. It is necessary that Bengal and Maharastra, the Punjab and Madras should know one another in all particulars as minutely as possible. We have to help forward the attempts of the people of each province to settle in other provinces and to create opportunities and fields of work there. Arrangements have to be made for the study of the several vernaculars at school. We have to try to make at least the three Indian vernaculars, viz., Bengali, Marhatti, and Tamil, subjects for higher education in every part of India. In this way we have to organise closer intimacy and mutual intercourse between the several provinces. Besides it is necessary to make the relations of India with the other countries of the world more direct and intimate. Efforts are to be made by which Indians can live and move with other peoples in their own countries and rise to high positions in their social, intellectual, commercial, and other spheres. We have to see that our educated countrymen can have posts of service in foreign lands and spend their lives there, that our preachers and missionaries can attract the attention and sympathy of foreign peoples by organising lectures and discussions on Indian society, religion and literature. Arrangements should also be made for a wider diffusion of knowledge in our country regarding the constitution of various civilised

states, their social condition, their literary history, their commercial and religious life. At least two European languages, viz., French and German should be introduced into the curriculum of higher educational institutions in India.

Our range of thoughts and activity being thus widened, our thoughts and aspirations, our wants and desires will grow in variety and complexity. This extension of the sphere of life and enlargement of its duties will not only create the materials and elements of a new literature, but will *pari passu* usher a new literature into being. Coming into contact with various sights and sounds and observing the multifarious manners and customs of many lands our countrymen will spontaneously tend to institute comparisons, detect differences and discover the principles of unity and harmony. Such comparative studies will be the basis of a real science of criticism. theology, sociology, literature, history and other human subjects will gradually assume the characteristics of the historico-comparative science. A scientific and philosophic era will commence with greater reliance on reason and discussion — as opposed to passions, prejudices and blind faith — and with the discovery of novel methods of thinking, Literature will march along new channels with quickened pace. Besides, mutual intercourse among the various provinces and *rapprochement* with foreign people will even unconsciously lead to our adoption of new methods and means for the expression of ideas. Our vocabulary will be enlarged and the language grow more copious. Various terms and technical words will naturally be introduced and supply the necessary gaps. Under these new conditions our mother tongue will have the capacity of easily bearing and expressing the high and serious thoughts of science and philosophy. Compilations of the best ideas in foreign literature and translations of the best works of foreign authors will be matters of course; and national literature will continue to swell in volume and grow in dignity.

The time has arrived when in the field of letters a new desire is to be awakened and a new demand to be consciously created, such as have been done by the Great Men, who have in various times and climes filled the people's minds with cravings after new ideals. We want men who can preach the need for the enrichment of our life and development of our literature. A movement exclusively for the diffusion of learning is required to supply our wants in the department of higher education, mass education, industrial education and female education. We are in need of the institution of commissions and the appointment of missionaries and ex-

perts who can securely study literary, educational and industrial conditions, and suggest ways and means for their improvement. We can no longer put off the foundation of permanent endowments and the organisation of academies and institutes for the carrying on of researches, experiments, translations and investigations by learned and devoted students under the guidance of scholars, organisers and educationists.

In order that the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* may supply these new wants, its scope of work has to be enlarged. Permanent arrangements have to be made for the maintenance of several educated literary men with proper monthly salaries, in order that they may without anxiety, devote their whole time and energy to the pursuit of literature. If fortunately opportunities be created by which Bengali literature can secure the entire literary thought and activities of our distinguished men like Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal in the field of education, Babu Hirendra Nath Dutt in the field of philosophy, Babu Ramendra Sundar Tribedi, in the field of science, and Babu Jadu Nath Sarkar in the field of history and if, under their guidance and control, some of the best students of our country, freed from pecuniary wants can proceed to work together for the development of our literature, is it too much to expect that in the course of ten years we can have the best literary treasures of the world in our own national literature, that we can have the thoughts and investigations of Plato, Herbert Spencer, Guizot, Hegel and other European philosophers through the medium of our own language and that in no time the educational system of Bengal can grow into one that is natural and really national ?

Idealism is our crying need now. There can be no re-organisation, no new arrangement of social conditions unless the country and its peoples are overflowed with the stream of idealism, the parent of *vairagya*. There must be such idealism as can enable men to realise future success in present failures, and perceive the great whole in the rude beginnings, can induce them to sacrifice their immediate and personal interests and to throw themselves life and soul into their mission ; such idealism as can inspire educated men to shun the prospects of fame and career, and feel their highest self-realisation in the spread of education and diffusion of learning and to spend their whole life in the creation of opportunities for others, even at the sacrifice of their own higher culture ; such idealism as can move the man of wealth to feel a personal responsibility for the elevation of the whole society in intellect, wealth, religion, and morals, and to pioneer with his financial resources the work of national rege-

ration ; such idealism as can induce the man with power and capacity to consider his sole religion to be the use of his ability for the development of the powers and abilities of others by removing their thousand and one poverties and obstructions. We are in need of missionaries and Sanyasis illumined with such idealism as can be a permanent inspiration to their soul without in any way agitating it, as can focus and concentrate their energies without dissipating and emasculating them, as can impel a man to renounce the world and take to the work of preaching in a steady and restrained manner.

No movement, however, be it that for the liberty of thought or for prosperity through commerce, whether it be the development of literature, or the spread of education, can establish its position in society in a short time. Like all other things in this world, they grow and extend slowly and gradually. It requires much time and pains to divert thought along new channels. The uncertainty and doubts of success about untried paths engender fear in men's minds. Faith in new methods of thought and work can be created in a society and credit can be established regarding them only when after acquiring experience as to obstacles and difficulties, from the failures of pioneers in the initial stages, certain individuals have attained some amount of success. It is these successful individuals in the later stages of the movements, who become examples to many, round whom men flock together in numbers and fill the fields of thought and activity. It is at this successful stage that the new thoughts and aspirations become inherent in the character and dispositions of men, and handed down through generations, become the ideal of the whole community.

So long, therefore, as our literary, educational, and scientific movements do not arrive at this stage ; so long as individuals by taking to literature, industry or education do not attain success and can further the interests of themselves and their families ; so long as people by adopting these new paths do not acquire personal dignity and fame ; so long the responsible pioneers have to endure losses and wastes, and undergo silent and solitary penances for the opening up of paths for future generations.

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### 1 *Indian Representation at the XIth ICLA Congress*

The biggest ever representation of Indian comparatists was made at the XIth ICLA Congress held in Paris and at Sussex in August 1985. Two major areas dealt with at the Congress were the new domains of Comparative Literature and cultural dialogues. While the first included newer orientations in Comparative Literature research such as narratology, translation studies, reception aesthetics and communication theory, semiotics as well as Comparative Literature in relation to recent literary theories and to the ever-changing concepts of General and World Literature, the second included such themes as dialogue between the oral and the written, acculturation and emergence of new literatures. Besides two symposia were held simultaneously within the Congress on the Protestant diaspora and the international movement of ideas and the international diffusion of the works of Victor Hugo. The Congress in Paris was followed by a colloquium at the University of Sussex on Literature and Values.

The Indian comparatists were represented by Naresh Guha, former Head of the Department of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, who was elected to the ICLA Bureau and who chaired a session, Nabanceta Dev Sen from Jadavpur University and Subroto Ray from Burdwan University, each of whom presided over a session. The participants from the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, were Amiya Dev, Swapan Majumdar, Subha Dasgupta and Debasprasad Bhattacharya, the latter a research scholar. Other participants from India were Gurbhagat Singh from Punjabi University, K. Chellappan from Bharathidasan University, M. Waseem from Jamia Millia Islamia and Jibankrishna Banerjee from Visva-Bharati. While the papers of Amiya Dev and Swapan Majumdar dealt with the theoretical aspects of Comparative Literature studies in the Indian situation, a large majority of the others focussed on aspects of Indian literature usually in comparison with western literature or on reception studies. The general consensus among the participants was that Comparative Literature in the West did not really extend its boundaries to include the Orient and hence possibilities of a dialogue were limited. However, in this connection the Orient, India in particular, also had a responsibility in putting itself forward, in placing on the world map its rich resources which are potential enough to add new dimensions to the study of Comparative Literature. It is left to comparatists in India to meet this challenge.

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